

دعاكم

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portrait of
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Bleak outlook

FOREIGN Minister Amr Mousa, who is currently on a visit to Paris, met President Jacques Chirac yesterday and conveyed a message from President Hosni Mubarak.

Following the hour-long meeting, Mousa told reporters that the message dealt with the "obstacles" facing the Middle East peace process. Mousa blamed what he described as a "negative situation" on Israel's policy of establishing settlements in occupied territories. "This is illegal and unacceptable," Mousa said. "Everybody is pessimistic about the future of the peace process. This is not merely a French, Egyptian, Arab or European impression, but an international impression."

Greek visit

GREEK President Costis Stephanopoulos begins a four-day visit to Egypt on Friday and is expected to be received by President Hosni Mubarak on Saturday. Talks are set to focus on bilateral ties, the peace process in the Middle East and other issues of common interest.

President Stephanopoulos will start his visit in Alexandria where he will meet members of the city's Greek community, before heading for Cairo later on Friday.

Trade dispute

THE PALESTINIAN National Authority has rebuffed demands that Palestinian businessmen pay millions of dollars in back payments owed from contracts with Israelis. At a meeting held in the West Bank town of Ramallah on Tuesday between the Israeli Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Palestinian Trade Minister Maher Al-Masry, Palestinian Deputy Trade Minister Samir Huileh said that before respecting bills and contracts, it would be better to solve the problems that obstruct trade between the two sides.

AFP reported that the Palestinians raised issues such as the Israeli closure imposed on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and the blocking of merchandise at border posts, which disrupts delivery and payment. The PNA refused an Israeli demand that Israeli businessmen be allowed to distribute directly in the West Bank and Gaza.

Israeli raids

IF 'ELI warplanes rocked in south Lebanon three times early yesterday. Lebanese security forces said the planes fired several rockets onto Iqlim Al-Toufah ridge, but there was no immediate word on casualties in the air raid — the first into Lebanon since Sunday.

Yesterday's attacks came minutes after an exchange with machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades between Israeli forces and guerrillas on the northeastern edge of the Israeli-occupied security zone in south Lebanon. Three guerrillas were killed in the exchange.

Arabic bound

ALGERIA'S National Transitional Council, which replaced the parliament after the 1992 elections were cancelled, passed a controversial law on Tuesday setting a deadline for wider use of the Arabic language in official functions by 5 July 1998 and in schools by 2000. The law allows the use of foreign languages in international relations.

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Ghali fires parting shot

GHANA'S Kofi Annan was sworn in as the new UN secretary-general for the next five years on Tuesday, amid optimism that his appointment would produce a long-awaited political truce with Washington. But outgoing Secretary-General Boutros Ghali almost stole the limelight with a tough farewell address in which he castigated the United States.

At a special General Assembly ceremony, Washington was the uninvited target of both men's speeches, with Annan and Ghali appealing to the United States to pay its arrears to save the United Nations. But while the 58-year-old Ghanaian urged a spirit of "healing" and consensus, Ghali, who was denied a second term by Washington, adopted an overtly critical tone and stressed that the secretary-general's independence was paramount.

Ghali's hard-hitting speech, which won him a standing ovation, urged that "now a new secretary-general is being appointed, all arrears should be paid at once, as has been promised so often in the past few months."

Washington's longstanding delay in paying its dues, which now amount to more than \$1.3 billion, has precipitated the worst financial crisis in the 51-year history of the United Nations. The United States is the largest UN contributor, but also its biggest debtor.

The US Congress has linked payment of the US debt to the departure of Ghali, whose term saw a deterioration of relations between Washington and the United Nations, largely because he took an independent stand on issues ranging from Bosnia and Somalia to the Middle East. On 19 November, the US vetoed a second term for the 74-year-old Egyptian diplomat.

Ghali made his concern for the continued independence of the secretary-general clear to the assembly. "If one word above all is to characterize the role of the secretary-general, it is independence," he said.

Annan, who has until now held the post of under-secretary general for peacekeeping, says that restoring the financial stability of the United Nations will be among his top priorities. "Applaud us when we prevail, correct us when we fail, but above all, do not let this indispensable, irreplaceable institution wither, languish or perish as a result of member state indifference, inattention or financial starvation," he told the assembly.



photo: Reuters

Mahdi seeks to outflank Bashir

With Sadig Al-Mahdi fleeing Khartoum, the Umma Party and the SPLA may be consummating a marriage of convenience to outsmart Sudan's ruling clique. Gamal Nkrumah talked to the Sudanese opposition leader

Unless you were born yesterday, you'll know that relations between Hassan Al-Turabi, the current speaker of the Sudanese parliament and leader of the National Islamic Front (NIF), and Sadig Al-Mahdi, the Umma Party leader and former Sudanese prime minister, were not always rock-bottom. From an outsider's perspective, the Sudanese political scene looks chaotic. Members of close-knit families often belong to rival political groups from opposite ends of the political spectrum.

But Sadig Al-Mahdi, who escaped from Khartoum to the Ethiopian capital Asmara two weeks ago, strongly believes that Turabi and the NIF do not have a monopoly on Islamic teachings. Turabi and Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir have played down the implications of Sadig Al-Mahdi's flight. Exile, Al-Mahdi's detractors say, will politically exhaust him. Others strongly believe that this is the beginning of the end for the Bashir-Turabi regime.

Why did Sadig Al-Mahdi escape from Khartoum at this particular juncture? His absence is a blow for the regime. Al-Mahdi told *Al-Ahram Weekly* in a telephone interview this week that the opposition's military operations against the regime were escalating. As leader of Sudan's largest opposition group, he had to be closer to the headquarters of opposition forces in Asmara. He also wants to mend his fences with Egypt.

"I am very sad about the deterioration in relations be-

tween Egypt and Sudan. We are brothers, and brothers sometimes have different views and opinions. Brothers sometimes disagree. But today, under the [Bashir-Turabi] regime, things have gone too far. Relations between Egypt and Sudan have never been so bad. The [Khartoum] regime has established a police state in the name of Islam. It has embarked on a jihad against fellow Muslims. This is the most reactionary partisan tendencies of extremists. The NIF's brand of Islam has led to the rapid deterioration of relations with Sudan's neighbours," Al-Mahdi said.

There was a consensus among my supporters that the current regime is a murderous regime and that I should leave the country and go into political exile. I resisted going into exile for the past five years. The government's policy was to intimidate the people of Sudan. Of late it became quite clear that the government wanted to use me as a human shield and hold me responsible for the deeds of the external opposition. I was subjected to 24-hour surveillance and a vicious character assassination campaign. I decided to deprive the regime of their strategy, so I fled the country right under their noses on Thursday 5 December. It is a very important date for me personally and marks a watershed in my political career. The political struggle against the regime must be buttressed by armed struggle," Sadig Al-Mahdi told the *Weekly*.

John Garang, leader of the Sudan People's Liberation

Army (SPLA), happened to be in Asmara when Sadig Al-Mahdi arrived. "Garang was in Asmara and heard that I was in town. He decided to pay me a courtesy call. This was not the first time I had met Garang. I last met him in July 1986 when I was prime minister — I am still the popularly elected prime minister of Sudan. We had our disagreements, but we agreed that it was imperative to stop the civil war in southern Sudan. We both agreed that there could be no end of civil war without addressing the many grievances of the southern Sudanese people. There must be a just settlement of the crisis and the legitimate aspirations of the southerners must be fulfilled. Cooperation was not possible then," Al-Mahdi stressed.

"Today, the situation is very different. We are in opposition to the regime and now we move more closely together. I believe that this relationship — between the SPLA and the Umma Party — is crucial for Sudanese unity. My being here in Asmara is an opportunity to cement our working relationship. It must be cemented within the context of the National Democratic Alliance (the umbrella organisation of Sudanese opposition groups). We must take steps to preserve Sudanese unity, but a plebiscite must be held to decide the issue of na-

tional self-determination for the southerners," said Al-Mahdi.

Al-Wathiq Kamir, a member of the Sudan Forces Alliance and the New Sudan Brigade (NSB), told the *Weekly*: "There are three important points to remember concerning Sadig Al-Mahdi's departure from Khartoum. Al-Mahdi is the legitimate leader of Sudan — being the country's popularly elected prime minister. Second, Al-Mahdi is the leader of the so-called internal opposition. His escape from Khartoum removes the claim often made by detractors of the Sudanese opposition forces that a chasm lies between the internal and external opposition. Al-Mahdi's move can only strengthen the opposition forces. Third, Al-Mahdi has an enormous following as leader of Sudan's largest political grouping, the Umma Party. Al-Mahdi also has all the prestige of a tribal leader in northern, central and especially western Sudan. He is also the leader of an influential religious organisation — the Ansar or Mahdist movement."



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Stand-off over settlements

As Arafat ploughs on with negotiations over redeployment from Hebron, the lighted fuse of Netanyahu's aggressive settlement policy continues to burn, writes Graham Usher from Jerusalem

The resumption on 16 December, of Palestinian-Israeli talks on the Hebron redeployment has, for now, lowered the heat in the Occupied Territories. Following President Clinton's stern — by his standards — rebuke of the Likud government's settlement policies, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said he expected to wrap up a deal in Hebron "in the next few days." PLO leader Yasser Arafat reiterated that he was "ready to meet the Israeli leader at any time, at any place."

But few Palestinians are holding their breath — including, it appears, Arafat. On 17 December he embarked on a short trip to Austria and Italy, suggesting that he, at least, is not expecting a Hebron agreement any time soon.

The reason was supplied by the PLO's representative in Jerusalem, Faisal Husseini: "As long as the current atmosphere endures, there will be no progress on Hebron," he said.

The "current atmosphere" has been caused by two Israeli government decisions which, last week, brought the Palestinian Authority (PA) and Israel to the very edge of confrontation. The renewal of negotiations on Hebron may be seen as a last-ditch effort by both sides to avert it.

On 10 December, Israel's Jerusalem District Planning Committee approved the construction of 132 housing units for a Jewish neighbourhood in Kat Al-Amud, a small village in occupied East Jerusalem. Kat Al-Amud has around 11,000 inhabitants, all of them Palestinian. Should the plan go ahead — says Israeli Peace Now spokesman Alon Aron — it would be "the first time since the six-day war" in 1967 that any Israeli government "has decided to build a settlement in the heart of a Palestinian neighbourhood." The anticipated Palestinian reaction to such a precedent was sketched by Husseini: "An explosion," he said, "immediately".

A small explosion came the very next day. In the first armed operation of its type for nearly five months, two Jewish settlers were killed in a drive-by shooting on the road to Beit El, a settlement near Ramallah. The PLO's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) claimed responsibility for the attack, insisting that the Palestinian struggle against Israel

would continue "as long as the occupation and settlements continue." The hit found some popularity on the Palestinian street, but among the PA leadership it was received with absolute dismay.

Having lost the diplomatic initiative to Arafat after the September clashes, Beit El offered Netanyahu a rare chance to retrieve it. He imposed a closure on Ramallah, demanded that the PA extradite all suspects to Israel and vowed, at the settlers' funeral, that settlements under Likud would not be "uprooted — they will be strengthened".

More damagingly, the fact that the assailants fled into Ramallah enabled the Israeli Defence Forces to request, and obtain, permission from the PA to enter the self-rule area to investigate the wreckage of the attackers' car. Netanyahu made sure the political significance of this was lost on no one. "Now you realise why we are insisting on security arrangements in Hebron," he told a press conference at Beit El. The two leaders also agreed to reconvene the Hebron negotiations.

Arafat's hesitancy is not hard to fathom. However skilled the PLO leader has been since September in marshalling international support behind the Palestinians, such support has yet to move Netanyahu on Hebron, or Likud from its colonial ambitions in the West Bank. Should Arafat be tempted to resort to unilateral actions — such as suspending the Oslo process by declaring a Palestinian state — there is no guarantee that practical international and Arab support would be any more forthcoming. On the contrary, Netanyahu would be likely to seize on such a "violation" as his opportunity to exit from the Oslo process.

Responding on 15 December to Israeli accusations that the PA was stockpiling weapons for another round of confrontations in the territories, Arafat said: "In September, we lost 80 men and 1,500 were injured. Who knows what will happen next time?" To defer now for the "next time", Arafat has chosen to plough on with the negotiations. His problem is that Palestinians know, when it comes to Likud and settlements, that negotiations are not going to be enough.

US-Israeli clash

US AND Israeli officials have clashed over President Bill Clinton's remarks criticising Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's new settlement policy. Netanyahu's top aide, David Bar-Ilan, referred to Clinton's criticism as "semantic posturing", a remark which US State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said was disrespectful to Clinton who was a friend of Israel.

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Mubarak warns of 'grave consequences'

DURING a visit to the Sixth of October city on Monday, President Hosni Mubarak issued a warning against the negative consequences of the current stalemate in peace efforts and also the establishment of Jewish settlements in Occupied Territories.

"The situation in which we are at present is a sad situation. The stalemate gives rise to fear and should not be allowed to continue," Mubarak told reporters. What is needed, he said, is Israeli flexibility. "This is not a defence of the Palestinians but of regional stability. If the stalemate continues, it will have grave consequences."

Asked about the Israeli government's plan to expand Jewish settlements, Mubarak said: "This is a very grave matter and is bound to complicate the [peace] process." Mubarak described the United States as "the principal partner in the peace process and the key to peace in the region." Asked about reports received by the Arab League indicating a radioactive leakage from Israel's Dimona reactor in the Negev desert near Sina, Mubarak said: "I have no sure information about this. But if there is a leakage, this will be a grave matter and we will then take a position."

Answering a question whether the food-for-oil deal reached by Iraq and the United Nations opened the door for an inter-Arab reconciliation, Mubarak said: "Reconciliation needs time because some Gulf states, such as Kuwait, continue to have apprehensions.

Confidence-building is required. Iraq also must implement all resolutions of the Security Council and release the [Kuwaiti] prisoners. Other steps are also needed. When all this is done, then it will be possible to talk of an Arab reconciliation with Iraq."



War is no option

War is not a current option for any of the Middle East's states, and peace is the Arabs' strategic objective, according to the president's political adviser. Nevine Khalil reports



option, because the price would be too high."

Asked about Israel's nuclear option, El-Baz replied that it remained as a deterrent only, and that the "political and psychological" consequences of actually using a nuclear weapon would mean the payment of "a very high price." The world's nuclear powers, especially those who are signatories of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, would have the responsibility to check Israel in such an event, he added. In any case, he continued, Israel's proximity to its would-be enemies would expose it to fallout from a nuclear explosion.

El-Baz reviewed other outstanding issues between Egypt and Israel, including an Israeli investigation of the killing of Egyptian prisoners of war at the hands of the Israelis during the wars of 1956 and 1967. He said

the Egyptian government had a responsibility to act on the Israeli revelations concerning the killings, and that Cairo took the issue "very seriously". He urged the Israeli government to carry out a "fair and honest" investigation of the killings, "primarily so that we know the truth, and then we can decide what we will do."

El-Baz recalled that Shimon Peres' government wanted the hostile media campaign in Egypt to end so that witnesses would not be intimidated into retracting their confessions "for political reasons". "The first phase, the investigation, is still under way, because we want to define how much responsibility falls on individual Israeli soldiers for these atrocities, and how far the Israeli state is to blame," El-Baz said.

On the question of regional cooperation, El-Baz em-

phasised that an Arab common market, similar to the European Union, was a prerequisite for a Middle Eastern market including both the Arab states and Israel. He said that the Arab summit last June gave priority to an Arab market, and if studies were finished by the end of 1997, an Arab common market could be set up within four years, "an achievement in itself, considering the EU took 40 years," he said.

El-Baz rejected the argument that Arab regimes are too dissimilar and therefore cannot be united, commenting that "common factors like religion, language and heritage far outweigh differences." In the evolving world order, it would be difficult for a single country to deal with the economic blocs which are expanding by the day, he said, "which is why the Arabs have to form a bloc to serve their common interests."

Another subject currently under study is the European proposal for creating a European Rapid Operation Force (EUROFOR) to function south of the Mediterranean. El-Baz said that Egypt, along with the other states concerned, was looking into the proposal and would form an opinion within the coming weeks. EUFOR, proposed by France, Italy, Spain and Portugal, will use military units to carry out emergency humanitarian operations like evacuating foreign civilians in a *coup d'état* situation, peace-keeping operations in war zones and crisis management. "Although some believe this idea has colonial overtones," El-Baz said, "the initiators are very friendly states and we should consider their proposal."

Compensation money

THE WEEKLY newspaper *Al Ahali*, mouthpiece of the leftist Tagammu party, has agreed to pay novelist Tharwat Abaza the sum of £15,000 in court-ordered compensation. The newspaper gave its consent after it was warned by the court that its assets could be impounded for its failure to pay.

Abdel-Aal El-Bagoury, the newspaper's editor-in-chief, cited administrative and legal procedures to explain the delay. "We are also known as a newspaper with limited resources, but we were planning to pay anyway," he said.

El-Bagoury said that a court employee visited the newspaper's downtown headquarters last week and decided to impound one of its computers if it failed to pay. The court set 9 January as the deadline for payment.

"Of course we were going to pay, but I really regret that fellow newspapers made a big issue out of nothing in order to satisfy Abaza," El-Bagoury said.

Abaza, a member of the Shura Council,

had filed a lawsuit against *Al Ahali* for publishing an article by journalist Salah Eissa which the court found to be libelous.

'Iron lady' stays in Athens

THE GREEK Supreme Court ordered last Thursday that Hoda Abdel-Moneim, the so-called iron lady who fled Egypt 10 years ago, should not be turned over to Egyptian authorities, thus quashing a lower court's decision to extradite her to Cairo's request.

Egypt had demanded Abdel-Moneim's extradition to serve a three-year imprisonment sentence passed against her in absentia for issuing a bad cheque for the amount of \$50,000. But the Egyptian government's case against Abdel-Moneim was weakened when her defence attorney presented the court with documents proving that she had paid the value of the cheque later. The attorney also presented the court with other documents showing that Abdel-Moneim had made a donation of \$30,000 to the Greek Orthodox Church in Greece.

In previous hearings, Abdel-Moneim claimed that she was Christian and was hounded by Egyptian authorities for making donations to Egyptian churches. Before her escape from Egypt, Abdel-Moneim ran a land-developing company by the name of Hedco. She reportedly collected millions of pounds from the would-be buyers of apartments in condominium buildings which her company was constructing. But instead of delivering the apartments to the buyers or re-lending them, she fled the country, reportedly with the help of a high official.

House collapse

SEVEN brothers and sisters were killed along with their grandmother on Monday when the wall of an adjoining building crushed their two-story house in the village of Bunder Nasir in the governorate of Beni-Suef south of Cairo.

The children, aged between seven and 14, and the 60-year-old grandmother were sleeping when the wall of the adjacent and vacant building crumbled, leveling their house. The children's 40-year-old mother was seriously wounded. The father was not home at the time of the tragedy. Authorities had ordered the evacuation of the house several months ago, considering it unsafe.

Disabled students in revolt

About 80 disabled students, some in wheelchairs, others on crutches, demonstrated on the grounds of Ain Shams University to protest their expulsion, along with nearly 100 other disabled colleagues, by the university's administration. The administration argued that they did not fulfil the criteria which would have earned them a university place with lower marks than the those required of able-bodied students.

The expulsions took place despite the fact that medical examination committees had determined the students suffered from some form of disability before the start of the academic year. On the basis of these findings, the students were allowed to enrol in the university. But the Ain Shams administration argues that incorrect criteria to determine disability was applied, and the decision to admit the students was reversed three months after the new term began.

According to Decree 333 of 1992 issued by the Supreme Council of Universities, a disabled student is defined as one who cannot depend completely on himself or herself, and needs help to stand and follow university courses. Disabled students are allowed to enrol in the faculties of arts,

law and commerce in any Egyptian university, provided that the total aggregate of their marks in the secondary school certificate is not less than 50 per cent. In other words, while an able-bodied student is required to have a total aggregate of, say, 60 per cent, to enrol in one of those faculties, a disabled student can gain admission with a lower mark.

The students demonstrated on Saturday, Sunday and Monday, with protest banners, some emblazoned in red ink, pleading with administration to allow them to re-enrol. "You have no feelings; feel God," said one of the banners. Another read: "Please have mercy on us, our families and our future."

The Ain Shams University president, Abdel-Wahab Abdel-Hafez, responded by vowing that he would reinstate the 178 expelled students if they were properly qualified for a university place.

But, according to other senior officials, this was unlikely. "I do not believe that this could happen," said Azzeddin Hilal, secretary-general of the Supreme Council of Universities. "As far as I know, the expelled students do not qualify for a place under the rules. These rules should be followed by all Egyptian universities."

The findings of the reports submitted by

the medical examination committees, defining the students as disabled, were wrong, according to Hassan Ghallab, the university's vice-president. "These students do not understand the official definition of disability. Under the decree, a person who uses a wheelchair or who has had one arm or leg amputated does not qualify as disabled," he said. "A disabled student must be either blind or has lost use of both arms or both legs. It is only this category of students which the decree, and I, consider disabled."

The university administration's mistake was not in expelling the students, but in doing so three months after the start of the academic year, Ghallab said.

Hamed Shata, dean of the Faculty of Medicine and head of the medical examination committee, steered a middle course. He acknowledged that the students were disabled, but added: "They do not suffer from severe disability and thus are not entitled by law to enrol in the university."

Dalia Mustafa, a first-year student in the Faculty of Arts, suffers from a total paralysis of her right hand and leg. "I really need someone to drive me to the university," she said. "And yet, the administration dismissed me because they do not consider me a disabled person. They told me that I can use my left hand to take down lecture notes. They do not understand that I can hardly use my left hand because it is too weak."

Mahmoud Auda, dean of the Faculty of Arts, said the expellees were "making a big fuss about nothing. Most of them are either registered, or can be accepted, at other faculties or high institutes. They have not lost much, only a month and a half because they were only admitted on the 16th of last October."

The plight of the students expelled from Ain Shams has had precedents at Cairo and Alexandria universities, which cited the same decree to turn down dozens of disabled students at the beginning of the academic year.

Many of them demonstrated outside the Cairo University campus, blocking traffic in the area for hours.

At Alexandria University, several complaints were filed with the administration by disabled students who had been barred. As a result, medical committees were directed to re-examine them and determine whether they met the legal criteria. "The university has accepted about 90 per cent of the total number of disabled students who applied this year," said Fathi Abu Ayana, the university's vice-president. "The rest are not considered as disabled. The student whose legs are paralysed or who suffers from a severe atrophy of the muscles of his hands is not a disabled person."

Some of the expelled students have threatened to take their universities to court. But Anwar Raslan, dean of Cairo

University's Faculty of Law, advised against it. "They will lose," he said. "The medical reports show that they are disabled, but they do not meet the legal criteria of disability."

In a published statement, Education Minister Hussein Kamel Bahaaeddin said the expelled students had "not met the conditions laid down by the Supreme Council of Universities to qualify as completely disabled."

To allow them to enrol, regardless of the total aggregate of their marks, would violate the principle of equality of opportunity.

Bahaaeddin said the students had been directed to enrol at other faculties and institutes which would deal with them on the basis of the aggregate of their marks in the secondary school certificate.

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Having faith in IDs

The Interior Ministry is taking in its stride a lawsuit filed by a human rights activist demanding that the religion category be dropped from new identity cards which the ministry will begin to issue at the start of 1997.

"There are basic data which should be included in every identity card and religion is one of them," said Police Maj. Gen. Ahmed Busila, head of the ministry's civil status department.

The lawsuit was filed with an administrative court by lawyer Mamoud Nakhla, a Copt, contesting the legality of Article 33 of the civil status law which stipulates that a person's religion should be listed in his/her identity card.

Nakhla claimed the procedure undermined national unity and could fuel sectarian strife, but the argument was rejected by Busila. "Listing religion in IDs does not put restrictions on choosing one's re-

ligion. There is no persecution or discrimination involved," he said.

Nakhla claims that the current ID format is illegal as it contains data that were not provided for by a civil status law issued in 1994 as well as the earlier law of 1964. However, an amendment was passed in 1995, making the listing of religion mandatory.

Before the passing of this amendment, Nakhla said "there was not a single article in the aforementioned laws that stipulated that the religious classification of a person should be mentioned in his/her ID."

But an official at the civil status office in the Giza district of Agouza said that religion was always listed in identity cards even before the 1964 law was passed.

"There are certain data that we may include upon a citizen's demand but we cannot eliminate basic data such as marital status, religion or date of birth," the of-

ficial said.

But Nakhla believes the practice is discriminatory. "The reason behind this lawsuit is that all citizens belong to the same nation and we should work to promote their peaceful coexistence, regardless of their religious classification," he said.

"Moreover, this practice does not exist in any civic state. Religion is mentioned in birth certificates only, and not in IDs."

Nakhla claims that some people feel discriminated against when their religious affiliation is disclosed. "Some people feel embarrassed when they produce their IDs only to find out that their employer belongs to a different faith," he said.

But Busila took issue with this claim.

"I have people who come and say they want to add their mother's name to the ID or women who ask that their age not be mentioned. But nobody asked that his religious affiliation be deleted," Busila said.



مكتبة من الأصل



(l-r) Defence Minister Tantawi awards Press Syndicate Chairman and Al-Ahram board chairman and chief-editor, Ibrahim Nassef, the Armed Forces Shield; the Weekly's defence correspondent Nassar receives the armed forces award for best interview

IN A CEREMONY organised jointly with the Press Syndicate, the armed forces this week presented its annual awards for best reporting on defence issues. The ceremony was held at the Gala Officers Club in Helipolis, and was attended by Defence Minister, Field Marshal Mohamed Hussein Tantawi, Information Minister Safwat El-Sherif, Press Syndicate Chairman Ibrahim Nassef and a host of armed forces and media personalities, including defence correspondents of the various press publications, both national and opposition. The Defence and Information Ministers exchanged

the shields of their respective ministries, while Nassef, in his capacity as Press Syndicate Chairman was awarded the Armed Forces Shield by Tantawi.

For the fourth year running, *Al-Ahram Weekly* has won highest honours. Galal Nassar, the Weekly's defence correspondent, was awarded first prize for the best press interview of 1995-96 for an interview with

Top honours

Defence Minister Field Marshal Mohamed Hussein Tantawi in October 1995, on the eve of Tantawi's departure for a visit to the United States. First prize for spot coverage went to *Al-Ahram's* Tamer Qabil, while Mohammed Ali El-Sayed of *Al-Ahram's* *Al-Sharq* magazine won first prize for the best news feature. The photography prize went to *Al-Ahram's* Nour Sobhi.

Field Marshal Tantawi also awarded Nassar, as the Weekly's representative, a special certificate of merit. Addressing the gathering, Maj. Gen. Sami Farag, director of the Morale Department of the armed forces, lauded the military reporters for keeping Egyptians, and Arabs in general, well informed on the activities of the Defence Ministry and the armed forces. The

coverage of the Badr-96 military exercise drew special praise for "conveying the message to Egypt and other states in the region that the armed forces are in a high state of combat readiness in order to protect our land and the national security."

Farag added that the Defence Ministry's Information Department had taken giant strides forward by opening an audio-visual centre and a new printing press, and that several journalists had enrolled at the National Defence College of the Nasser Military Academy for advanced defence and national security studies.

Alarm sounded about normalisation's spies

The confessions of Emad Ismail, an Egyptian arrested on charges of spying for Israel, have brought to light what is believed to be a new Israeli espionage strategy, specially evolved for peace time. Ismail admitted that the Israeli intelligence service, Mossad, requested him to provide information on factories, workers and production at the industrial 10th of Ramadan City, the public sector companies that are being put up for privatisation and the conditions of Egyptians working in Arab countries.

In doing so, Israel appeared to be taking advantage of the climate of peace and misusing legitimate channels for normalising relations for espionage purposes. Israeli agents cross the border into Egypt legally and under the legitimate cover of jobs in farms or factories, they gather information about Egypt's new industrial cities, infrastructure, businesses and business ventures. But according to Egyptian anti-espionage sources, those suspected of engaging in such activities are kept under close watch by the Egyptian security authorities.

Ismail was arrested along with Azzam Azzam, an Israeli Arab. Ismail owned a textile factory which was on the verge of bankruptcy and closure. According to a senior security source, Azzam arrived in Egypt in the company of an Israeli busi-

nessman, who offered to bail Ismail out. Ismail and the businessman became partners, with Ismail practically turning over the factory to his Israeli associate. A joint venture for exporting jeans to Europe was launched under the name of Tevra. Azzam worked as a technician in the factory and became a close friend of Ismail's.

Through their association, which included excursions to Israel, Azzam soon realised that Ismail was ready to do anything in order to get money for his factory. At this point, Azzam revealed his identity as a Mossad agent and managed to enlist Ismail's services.

According to the Egyptian security source, the type of information requested from Ismail reflected "Israel's ambition to gain economic hegemony over the region through the setting up and manipulation of a Middle Eastern common market." In order to control this market, Israel sought to build up a socio-political database, particularly concerning Egypt, which it views as a rival in any regional arrangement.

The "Tevra operation" was known to the Egyptian security authorities from its very beginning, the source said, and remained under its control. Ismail and Azzam were kept under surveillance which proved, beyond any shadow of a doubt, the sources asserts, that they were spying for Israel. Their arrest was perfectly legal,

the source added. The two confessed that Ismail was being provided with the equipment and funds necessary for renovating his factory in return for supplying Israel with information.

Security reports are sounding the alarm about the presence in Egypt of dozens of Israeli companies, some of which have become involved in joint ventures with Egyptian companies or have provided them with finance. Some of the Israeli companies prefer to make a quick profit, at the expense of Egyptian economy and the Egyptian taxpayer, and then head back home. Many of the staff of those Israeli companies are agents for Mossad or Shin Bet, Israel's internal security apparatus, Egyptian security sources charge.

Before the arrest of Azzam, an Israeli intelligence officer, whose name has been withheld, was expelled from Egypt for spying and banned from re-entering the country. This officer, sources say, acted to ruin the good name of Egyptian furniture exports to Europe, sources say.

Security sources refer also to the case of an American businesswoman, who, the sources say worked for Shin Bet. They believe that she acted to deliberately undermine the interests of Egyptian business men and succeeded in causing a number of their heavy losses. One of these businessmen is Mahmoud El-Shemaway, a member of the Shura Council, who was cheated out of sums of LE250,000 and \$35,000 by this woman, in transactions which turned out to be bogus, the sources say. A letter proving this woman's Shin Bet connection was found in her possession, the sources say.

According to security sources, Israel began using Israeli-Arabs in espionage after other nationals encountered difficulty in

gathering information. Israeli-Arabs, it was thought, would find it easier to infiltrate Arab societies. This shift in Israeli strategy could be traced to a "confrontation" that took place recently between an Israeli businesswoman, who is a frequent visitor to Cairo, and the Ministry of Education. This woman offered to provide the ministry with Israeli-made computers and computer programmes in an apparent attempt to infiltrate the Egyptian education system as a first step towards other intrusions. The offer was promptly turned down.

On the basis of these repeated Israeli infiltration attempts, many of which have not been publicised, the security authorities have listed various categories of agents who could pose as employees of major companies and factories. There are agents who seek to recruit Egyptians to work for Israel, others who gather information and yet others bent on subverting the factory or project that employs them. There are also information analysts, rumour mongers and industrial spies posing as business or marketing experts.

The security authorities have also warned the country's major companies against Israeli threats, which include attempts to obstruct and sabotage Egyptian industries and markets, and to turn the Egyptian market into a satellite to Israel's economy.

There is yet another pattern to Israel's peace time economic espionage, according to security sources. They cite various occasions in which Israel is said to have pirated Egyptian products and ideas. Not only are the designs of Egyptian carpets, furniture and even underwear pirated, but any successful Egyptian project or idea is "borrowed" and an imitation rival launched, security sources say. When Egypt disclosed plans for a Disneyland in Alexandria, Israel announced similar plans for Haifa. When Cairo began building the "Hollywood of the Middle East", Israel said it would establish a major cinema-production city. When Cairo spoke of a Riviera along the Red Sea coast, Israel announced a similar project at Eilat, security sources say.

The latest theft of an Egyptian idea, according to these sources, involved a project for golf courses, a plan which would attract thousands of visitors and net millions of dollars in revenue. Marking the introduction of golf tourism to this country, the courses are planned to cover 200 feddans along the Ismailia highway northeast of Cairo and will be surrounded by 520 villas for visitors' accommodation. But no sooner was the announcement made in Cairo, than Israel said it was establishing golf courses at Ashkelon and Caesarea, north of Tel Aviv.

Mercedes fracas

Accusations of corruption levelled by an Arabic-language weekly magazine against a top Television official are expected to result in his dismissal. Khaled Dawoud reports

A report published by the weekly magazine *Rose El-Youssef* three weeks ago under the headline "Scandal on the Nile", accusing an unnamed official of corruption has triggered a chain reaction that may cost Mam-

douh El-Leithi his job as chief of the production sector at Egyptian Television. Without mentioning El-Leithi or Egyptian Television, the report, by the magazine's Deputy Chief Editor Adel Hammouda, ac-

cused a top official at "one of the government's most influential institutions concerned with propagating morality" of receiving a brand new Mercedes E200 worth LE482,000 from a wealthy Arab Gulf notable.

The last thing Hammouda apparently expected was that this official would respond by filing a complaint with prosecution authorities accusing Hammouda of libel and then admitting that he had indeed received the car from the rich Arab.

El-Leithi, an influential manager at Egyptian Television, runs a department with a multi-million-pound budget for producing television series, video clips and other entertainment programmes. In his complaint to the prosecutor, he defended his having received a car from the Arab notable. He claimed, and provided documents to prove the claim, that he was given the car in the form of a gift in return for writing the script of a 30-episode television series for the MBC satellite channel, owned by the brother of Saudi Arabia's Sheikh Abdul-Aziz Ibrahim Al-Brab. El-Leithi also alleged that Hammouda published the report after the production sector refused to buy two of his books to turn them into television series.

El-Leithi, originally a script-writer for some of the most well-known Egyptian films produced in the 1960s and '70s, stopped writing after he took over his post at Egyptian Television. More important, the price allegedly paid in return for writing the script of the series, titled *Freedom Apartment*, was extremely high by Egyptian standards. According to reports in the Arabic-language press, the highest paid script-writer in Egypt at present, such as Ossama Anwar Okasha and Wafaa Hamed, do not get more than LE40,000 for each episode they write for Egyptian Television or the mushrooming satellite channels, mostly owned by Saudi entrepreneurs. Thus, even if El-Leithi got double the average price, that would still not add up to the value of the expensive car he received.

In his original report, Hammouda said that he spoke on the telephone to the unnamed official [El-Leithi], who confirmed that he received the car but said that, although its licence carried his name, it was for use with the Saudi sheikh. Seif El-Nasr's mother subsequently announced that her daughter was married to the Saudi sheikh and that they were together on their honeymoon.

But, according to Hammouda, the honeymoon had started long before it was announced to the public. Questioned by the prosecutor last week, Hammouda claimed that Seif El-Nasr's failure to show up had cost the production sector no less than LE10,000 for constructing locations that were not used and tailoring clothes for the actress.

Hammouda also alleged that El-Leithi, who is said to wield strong influence on dozens of minor actresses working for Egyptian Television, helped in organising parties to entertain the

sheikh and his friends during their visits to Egypt.

Information Minister Safwat El-Sherif has referred the whole affair for investigation by the administrative prosecutor — a department charged with investigating government officials suspected of wrong-doing. El-Sherif also brought to an end rumours that El-Leithi was a candidate to head the board of trustees of the Egyptian Radio and Television Union. He appointed Abd-El-Rahman Hafez, the head of another sector in Egyptian Television, to fill this post which had become vacant following the transfer to another post of Ammar Bassiouni. Sources at the Information Ministry told *Al-Ahram Weekly* there was a great possibility that El-Leithi would not be given another post even if the administrative prosecutor's investigation proved his innocence.

In the complaint filed against Hammouda, El-Leithi denied that he did favours for Seif El-Nasr, insisting that he had ordered an investigation of her failure to show up for the shooting. He said she was immediately replaced by another actress and quoted Seif El-Nasr as telling officials that she had to travel abroad for surgery on her leg.

Despite repeated attempts by the *Weekly*, El-Leithi could not be reached for comment. Hammouda, for his part, had a long queue of journalists seeking more information about the scandal and its consequences.

"There is nothing personal between me and El-Leithi," Hammouda told the *Weekly* in response to a question whether the publication of the *Rose El-Youssef* report was related to the fact that El-Leithi was a candidate for the top post at the Radio and Television Union. "He [El-Leithi] was the one who turned the matter into a big case and a matter of concern to public opinion by going to the prosecutor-general and complaining against me. That was the surprising development."

Hammouda almost lost his temper when he was asked the oft-made question why he targeted El-Leithi, although rumours about the corrupt practices of other officials were making the rounds. "I am a journalist and I publish the information that is available to me," he said. "Get me authentic documents proving the corruption of any official and I will publish them. So, the question of why this one and not the other should not be asked. There is a lot of talk and rumours but what counts are the documents and the evidence."

In the case of El-Leithi, Hammouda said, he had a strong piece of evidence: a receipt from the company that sold the car stating that it received its value from the Saudi sheikh and that it was a "present" to El-Leithi, so that it could be registered in his name. Hammouda also said that because of El-Leithi's influential media post, the affair gained greater public attention than other corruption cases revealed in the past by the magazine, although bigger amounts of money were involved in those cases.

Hammouda argued that even if it was true that El-Leithi received the car in return for writing the script for the satellite channel, "how could we accept that the head of such an important sector in Egyptian Television work for a rival company? Maybe this will provide an answer to the question of why Egyptian Television lags behind while other Arab television channels are advancing."

Edited by Wadie Kirolos

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No light at tunnel's end

It has become increasingly evident that the US and Israel are opposed to a prominent and effective Egyptian role in support of the Palestinians. This opposition aims at the elimination of the Egyptian role and Egypt's isolation to serve US-Israeli interests. Dori Gold, the political adviser to the Israeli prime minister, explained the opposition to Egypt's intervention in support of the Palestinians by stating that it would further complicate matters and would not help bring about a settlement.

Israel's opposition to Egypt's role has been the reason why Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Moussa did not make his planned visit to Israel. Last Monday, there was talk in Israel about a prospective visit by Dori Gold to Egypt to discuss the obstacles to the peace process with Egyptian officials. Mohamed Bassioni, the Egyptian ambassador in Tel Aviv, however, told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that no one had contacted him regarding Gold's visit, but confirmed that Yitzhak Mordechai, Israel's minister of defence, would be visiting Egypt next week to meet with President Mubarak. The visit is in no way related to the two countries' bilateral relations, but will focus on the means to push forward the staggering peace process.

Mordechai is one of three members in the Israeli official committee entrusted with the follow-up of the peace negotiations. The other two members are the prime minister and the foreign minister of Israel. David Levy, the Israeli foreign minister, also will visit Amman on Thursday with top Jordanian officials and King Hussein regarding developments in the peace process. The visit to Amman takes place only a few days after the visit of Jordan's information minister, Marwan

Al-Moshtar, to Israel for talks with Israeli officials. The intensification of visits by Israeli officials to Arab countries is meant to give the impression that Israel is eager to pursue the peace process. These visits attempt to provide explanations and justifications for Israel's recent settlement measures which are seen in Arab countries as signs of a deterioration of the peace process.

The latest Israeli moves are regarded by the Palestinians as new attempts to evade Israel's commitments under the peace agreements. Israel is countering itself with a mere "public relations" approach which Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu has been orchestrating since he came to power. The acceptance by Arab countries of visits from Israeli officials reflects the current dilemma in Arab-Israeli relations. The intensification of US pressure is also directed toward creating the impression that there are signs of peace despite Israel's evasion and procrastination.

US pressures led Arafat last week to agree to meet with a special envoy of Netanyahu and Danny Naveh, the information director of the Israeli government. The meeting took place even before the outrage over Netanyahu's decision to encourage the expansion of settlements in the occupied Palestinian land had subsided. Worse still, it fell on the very day Netanyahu declared that Palestinian elements had been fomenting violence against Israel.

According to Nabil Abu Rdene, the spokesman for Arafat, the Palestinian leader came under pressure from the two Israeli officials during the meeting held last Sunday evening in his office in Gaza. He reluctantly agreed to speak to Netanyahu on the phone.

While the US and Israel are jointly exerting pressure for Arafat to meet with Netanyahu, they are at the same time jointly manoeuvring to obstruct Amr Moussa's visit to Israel. This smacks of a pre-meditated plan to marginalise Egypt's role in support of the Palestinians. The US has dispatched an official invitation to Arafat and Netanyahu to hold a summit, claiming that unless such a summit is held, the outstanding problems regarding Hebron could not be solved.

The Palestinians feel that their relations with Israel are locked in a vicious circle. The peace process has become virtually stalled while the Israeli government is steadily pursuing its goals as the crisis rag-

es on. Ahmed Qurei, the Chairman of the Palestinian Legislative Council, notes that the US is only required to force Israel to honour its commitments under the peace agreements. Other officials, however, regard the US call on Arafat and Netanyahu to meet as a way to circumvent the current crisis. But there is no certainty that such a meeting would lead to the implementation of the agreement on Hebron, or other matters deferred from the transitional stage, or the determination of a date for the resumption of negotiations for the final settlement.

On Monday evening, meetings began between Saib Unaykat, the Palestinian minister of local government, and Netanyahu's special envoy in the occupied section of Jerusalem. A prominent Palestinian official explained that nothing had been achieved at these meetings. So far, they have dealt solely with the establishment of a mechanism to resume negotiations on Hebron and other outstanding issues.



Uday (left) in a posed photo with father, Saddam and brother, Qusai. Baghdad released this photo on 13 December, following the attempt to assassinate Uday, currently recovering from his injuries (photo: Reuters)

Who did it?

CONFUSION continues to surround the failed assassination attempt that took place last week against Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's eldest son, Uday, as several organisations are suspected of carrying out the attack. As Iraq resumes its oil exports this week for the first time in six years under the UN food-for-oil plan, an outlawed Iraqi Shiite Muslim party, Al-Dawa Al-Islamiya, was the first to claim responsibility for the assassination attempt.

The statement, issued Saturday, said that Uday had been targeted to "take revenge for the martyrs of Islam and to remind public opinion of the suffering of our people, victims of Saddam's gang." Al-Dawa Party is the oldest Shiite Muslim party in the Iraqi opposition. It is part of the Teheran-based Iraqi Joint National Action Committee, an alliance of opposition groups that includes the Kurdish Iraqi Front, the Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution, the Movement of the Iraqi Mujahedin and the Islamic Movement in Iraq.

The Shiite opposition is particularly active in southern Iraq, where Saddam's Sunni government has launched regular campaigns of repression against the Shiite population, in re-

taliation for their failed uprisings in 1991, in the aftermath of the Gulf War. This claim of responsibility, however, has not stopped the quest for other suspects. Former Iraqi Intelligence Chief Wafiq Samarra'i said on Monday that he suspected the United Democratic Front of Baath dissidents. Adding to the confusion, a Kuwaiti newspaper reported that a member of the Dulaimi clan claimed that his tribe was responsible for the attack in a bid to avenge the murder of one of its members.

Uday, one of Saddam's most trusted aides, was attacked while driving his car in the wealthy Al-Mansour district of Baghdad. He was rushed to hospital, reportedly only slightly wounded, but while opposition groups claim he is seriously wounded, his actual condition remains unclear. He is regarded as a flamboyant and influential figure in Iraq's complex clan politics. He unofficially runs the trade and information ministries and controls a large media network and business empire that includes Iraq's Youth Radio and the Ba'bel newspaper. He has reportedly been the target of at least two other assassination attempts since the Gulf War.

Clashes threaten funding for Lebanon

On the eve of an American-sponsored conference, designed to attract money to fund Lebanon's reconstruction, violence flared in southern Lebanon. The upsurge in fighting between Israeli occupying forces and resistance guerrillas clouds Lebanon's image, at a time when it is important to prove to the international community that the nation has made significant advances toward restoring security and economic stability following 15 years of civil war and, therefore, entitled to political and financial support.

Last week, for the first time since the April cease-fire understanding was reached, Israel claimed that three Katyusha rockets fired from the village of Qlaileh in southern Lebanon slammed into the western Galilee region in northern Israel.

Hizbullah, the group spearheading the resistance guerrilla movement to oust Israeli soldiers from a zone they occupy in South Lebanon, denied launching the rockets. "If we launched the rockets we would have claimed responsibility," said Sheikh Naem Kassem, the deputy secretary-general of Hizbullah, "but the present time is not propitious for such attacks."

Three Palestinian groups in Lebanon who oppose the peace process also denied carrying out the attacks.

The head of Hizbullah's political bureau, Deputy Mohamed Read, claimed: "The mystery behind the Katyusha rocket attacks shows Israeli intentions. Israel may be using this as an excuse to launch attacks against Lebanon as well as tarnish its image abroad during the Washington conference."

Lebanon hopes to persuade donor nations attending the "Friends of Lebanon" conference in Washington this week to provide loans and grants worth \$5 billion over a five-year period to finance 31 infrastructure and development projects. The conference is part of the April understanding, aimed at helping Lebanon rebuild what was destroyed during Israel's military attack, dubbed "Operation Grapes of Wrath."

The cease-fire, which ended a 17-day Israeli onslaught against Lebanon that killed nearly 200 Lebanese civilians, mainly women and children, banned all attacks on and from civilian areas.

Since the accord was reached, Hizbullah, which often fired Katyusha rockets into northern Israel to retaliate against Israeli bombardment and the wounding of civilians, has refrained from such attacks.

While the origin of last week's rocket attack remains a mystery, Israel called for a meeting of the five-nation cease-fire monitoring group, set up after the April understanding to observe the truce, to look into its complaint that the accord was breached.

Only one day before the reported Katyusha attack, the group accused Israel of injuring six Lebanese guerrillas on December 7, when its forces shelled the villages of Kfar Tibut and Nabatiyah Al-Fawqa, situated just north of Israel's security zone.

After three days of meetings and investigations into the violence, the group—which includes representatives from the US, France, Lebanon, Syria and Israel—criticised the bombardment. The five nations had conducted a field inspection at the scene of the attacks and collected evidence, which contradicted Israeli claims that Hizbullah resistance guerrillas had fired from Kfar Tibut, provoking the retaliatory fire.

Israel reported that a Sagger missile was launched from Kfar Tibut and that Israeli troops in the zone fired back in self-defense. Lebanon insisted that Hizbullah did not violate the terms of the April truce, and that the group's statements do not compensate for Israeli aggressions against Lebanese civilians.

The group faces problems because decisions must be agreed upon unanimously.

"The group cannot condemn Israel's violations of the April understanding because

it did not violate the terms of the April truce as the agreement does not bar resistance attacks against Israeli occupying forces in Israel's border enclave in the south. Resistance guerrillas detonated a roadside bomb last week that targeted a military patrol in the occupied zone, killing two Israeli soldiers and prompting Israeli shelling.

The monitoring committee also acknowledged that Israel used a flechette shell—an internationally banned weapon that sprays hundreds of darts on impact to maximise casualties—in its attack.

This is the third time in two months that the group questioned Israel's attacks on southern Lebanese villages and the wounding of civilians. Hizbullah, however, was dissatisfied with the outcome of the monitoring group's meeting. According to Hizbullah Deputy Mohammed Fneish, meetings are not sufficient. "Israeli violations of the April truce should stop. Lebanese civilians should be protected," he said. "The committee's statements do not compensate for Israeli aggressions against Lebanese civilians."

The group faces problems because decisions must be agreed upon unanimously.

"The group cannot condemn Israel's violations of the April understanding because

its decisions must receive unanimous backing from all five members, and that includes Israel," Jean Michel Gausson, France's representative and the group's current chairman said earlier this month.

"This is the reason we cannot do what Lebanon wants, which is to condemn Israel for breaching the agreement."

Clearly backing Lebanon, Gausson further explained that the security situation in the south will not improve as long as Israeli occupation continues. "Israel's occupation of Lebanon land provokes resistance attacks, which is a natural response. The committee's task is not to halt these resistance operations. We are here to protect civilians, particularly the southerners who have suffered a lot."

The latest violence coincides with an increase in the number of militiamen defecting to Lebanon from Israel's proxy militia. Earlier this month, two brothers, Majed and Suleiman Hameyed, escaped from Israel's occupation zone and defected to Hizbullah.

According to Atallah Brahim, a Hizbullah official, four Israeli-allied militiamen have defected to Hizbullah during the past three months. "They are being encouraged by those who have already defected. We are continuously broadcasting messages to these recruits, who are disillusioned and unaware of their future. We are warning them that Israel will not assist them after a peace treaty is reached," he said at a press conference.

In fact, both brothers told reporters that they made their decision to escape after Ali Ghassem's defection to Hizbullah last November. "We were living in hell and now we are in heaven," said 23-year-old Majed. Majed and his brother Suleiman were forced to serve in the militia. "Israeli forces do not trust the members of their militia. They are always suspicious of us. We were never even allowed to be near an Israeli soldier," he said.

Israel's air raids on suspected guerrilla targets in the western Bekaa Valley over the weekend and the continuous clashes in the occupied zone are not positive signs for Lebanon. The government here has been working hard to convince the world of Lebanon's stability and encourage outsiders to invest and provide the needed money to continue necessary reconstruction.

The deteriorating security situation indicates that stability will not prevail unless Israeli forces withdraw from the south in compliance with UN Resolution 425.

Stalled referendum

As the Western Sahara referendum remains stalled for the fifth year running, the tide is turning in favour of Morocco, reports Samia Nkrumah

Over the past few weeks, there have been indications of improved ties between Morocco and Algeria. It is hardly a matter of coincidence that such signs are emerging at a time when tensions are dropping between the two neighbours over Algeria's support of the Polisario Front in its 20-year-long dispute with Morocco over the Western Sahara.

Significantly, the impact of the Western Sahara dispute is most felt in the relations between the member states of the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) comprised of Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia. One of the most promising sub-regional economic groupings in the Arab world when it was created in 1989, the AMU had its activities curtailed mainly by disputes between its two core members, Morocco and Algeria. Just over a year ago, when Algeria took over the presidency of the AMU, Morocco requested that the union's activities be frozen.

Even after diplomatic relations were restored between the two neighbours in 1988, relations remained strained. Each country accused the other of supporting its political opponents and interfering in the other's internal affairs. Morocco blamed Algeria for adopting a conflicting stance to its own on the Western Sahara at the UN and Algeria accused Morocco of failing to rein in the Algerian Islamic militants who take refuge in Morocco.

Hassan Abdel Khailek, a Moroccan specialist in Maghreb affairs with *Al-Ahram*, a newspaper affiliated to the opposition Istiqlal Party, commented on the recent improvement in Algerian-Moroccan relations. He says that the thaw first became apparent when King Has-

sein II and President Liamine Zeroual exchanged messages of congratulations on the occasion of their respective independence anniversaries earlier in the year. Also, last month, Moroccan and Algerian energy ministers met in Rabat with other AMU ministers to inaugurate the organisation's gas pipeline project running from Algeria to Europe via Morocco.

Besides prospects of a revived AMU in the coming year, there also have been recent high-level bilateral contacts between Morocco and Algeria. The interior ministers of both countries met in Rabat earlier this month to discuss bilateral relations and security issues. Reliable sources say that this may be a prelude to an Algerian-Moroccan summit. There is also speculation that efforts are being made to persuade Morocco to attend an AMU summit in Algiers at a yet to be confirmed date before Algeria relinquishes the AMU rotating presidency at the end of the year.

This rapprochement comes at a time when domestic concerns have diverted Algeria's attention from the issue of the Western Sahara. The Algerian regime's preoccupation with constitutional changes in its ongoing attempts to overcome Islamic militancy is chipping away at the country's commitment to the Polisario and its self-proclaimed Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR). Improved ties between Morocco and Algeria reflect just one of the developments on the ground that bode ill for Polisario. The last five years have seen major changes in the fortunes of the main protagonists in the dispute over the 270,000 sq km of desert land bordering

Morocco, Algeria and Mauritania.

Morocco already controls two-thirds of the disputed territory since its successful Green March saw 350,000 Moroccans advance into the Western Sahara in 1975. Since then, Morocco has invested heavily into the territory under its control. This autumn, the Moroccan government announced an investment package of around \$23 million in the Western Sahara provinces to provide thousands of Sahrawi university graduates with funds to start small and medium size businesses.

Even Polisario admits the changes. "New roads, ports and social services have been constructed and the inhabitants of the camps in the Moroccan-controlled areas," says Al-Salti D'chi Yousef, ambassador of SADR in Algiers. He nonetheless maintains that "a major population transfer took place by force" over the years to consolidate Morocco's claim over the territory.

The contested territory administered by Polisario comprises mostly camps in the southeast of Algeria where tens of thousands of refugees continue to battle harsh weather and living conditions. According to Polisario officials, around 160,000 inhabitants are dependent on humanitarian assistance from the office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the European Union and Algeria.

Little wonder that there have been a number of Polisario defectors over the years. According to Hassan Abdel Khailek, "around 8,000 Sahrawis returned to Morocco since the late eighties, including Polisario's Foreign Minister ib-

rahim Al-Hakim and other prominent figures in the movement." In his speech on 6 November this year to commemorate the anniversary of the Moroccan Green March, King Hassan II reiterated Morocco's claim to the Western Sahara. The monarch pointed out that it was Polisario who had requested the Rabat meeting held last September between Moroccan Crown Prince Sidi Ahmed, Moroccan Interior Minister Idris Al-Bassri and Polisario representatives. However, Morocco made the meeting conditional on the exclusion of "separation or independence" from the talks.

The Moroccan political opposition is as strongly opposed to the Sahara's separation as the government. Abdel Khailek said: "We only recognise the UN referendum as a means to settle the matter. Morocco does not regard Polisario as a conflicting party but fellow Moroccans who have lost their way and we try to convince them to return." Unsurprisingly, the two-day talks did not address the obstacles hindering the identification process of the voters who will participate in the referendum.

Till today the referendum to which Morocco and Polisario agreed under the 1991 UN settlement plan to determine if Sahrawis will be integrated into Morocco, remains a distant possibility. Differences between Morocco and the Polisario over who constitutes an eligible voter finally led the UN, which was already constrained by lack of funds, to suspend altogether the voter identification process last May. Polisario considers the 1974 census, taken before Spain withdrew from the territory and the Green March, as the true reflection of eligibility. However, the UN expanded the criteria for eligibility to include people whose fathers were born in the disputed territory and others with Sahrawi family ties. This coincided with Morocco's position because it ensures that Sahrawis living outside the territory at the time of the Spanish census will be included.

Consequently, so far, Polisario has submitted only 60,000 applications, while Morocco has submitted over 150,000. As expected, Polisario, which claims that Morocco included applicants with questionable ties to the disputed territory, has raised objections about the fairness of the identification process. If a referendum is carried out today based on the total number of applicants submitted by Morocco and the Polisario, the outcome would favour integration of the disputed territory into Morocco.

Meanwhile, Polisario's support is dwindling. In the post-Cold War era it lost the backing of Eastern Europe and earlier that of Libya in 1984, and now it is uncertain how long the movement can depend on Algeria for support.

In contrast, Moroccan diplomatic activity appears to have paid off. A growing number of African states have edged closer to the Moroccan position, including South Africa, which refrained from recognising SADR, and Burkina Faso, which was formerly a Polisario stronghold. This is a far cry from 1984, when Morocco withdrew from the Organisation of African Unity in protest over SADR's admission to the African organisation.

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In spite of the perpetual refrain of Israel's crushing victories, its astounding economic progress and its growing military prowess, the Israeli people have a profound sense of what the Israeli historian Jacob Talmon has called "the impotence of victory." Israel's victories have not led to the "normalisation" of the Zionist state, still a heavily armed fortress engaged in psychological warfare with all its neighbours and in an actual state of war with some of them. It persists in its complete denial of the Palestinian people and remains humiliatingly dependent on the US. While the gloss of Zionist propaganda portrays the optimistic and heroic Sabra, the Israeli imagination tells another story altogether. It tells of an awareness of the historical dilemma in which Zionism has landed the Zionist settlers. This intricate and multi-faceted dilemma expresses itself tragically at times and comically at others, when the sense of calamity vents itself in humour.

Perhaps the first problem the Israelis have come to realise fully is that Palestine is not "a land without people", as Zionist propaganda used to proclaim, and that the Palestinians are not merely Arabs, but a specific entity within the Arab national cultural formation. This reality sweeps the rug out from under the legitimacy of the very Zionist presence, regardless of how great Israel's victories have been and how blaring its propaganda. Even if the PLO has amended its charter in order to reassure the settlers that it does not aim to destroy the Zionist state, this does nothing to alter the existing human, material and cultural facts. The Palestinians are there, knocking on the doors, at times peacefully but with suppressed fury and, at others, with stones and even gun-fire, as a constant reminder to the Israelis that their Zionist entity resides on a historical fallacy.

As a result, the Israelis, as Amos Elon says, "are no longer able to reiterate the glib arguments and facile half-truths of the former generation" (with regard to Palestine as a land without people). The Israeli poet Amos Elon has said: "The historical resurrection of the Jewish people, and anything of value to the Israeli people no matter how beautiful, is founded upon the oppression of another nation. The young people of Israel will have to go to war and die for the sake of something that owes its existence to the perpetuation of injustice. This doubt, and this doubt alone, makes a very difficult basis for life."

The story "Confronting the Forest" by Israeli novelist Abraham B. Yehoshua has been described by some critics as destructive and suicidal. It relates incidents in the life of a student who is working on a research paper on the Crusades (another historical experience in futility that haunts the Israeli mind): the Crusader state failed utterly in securing its long term existence. The student was appointed to guard a forest that had been planted by the Jewish National Fund (JNF) on the site of one of the many Arab villages razed by the Zionist settlers. Each tree in the forest carried a plaque with the name of one of the many diaspora Jews abroad from whom the JNF collected donations for the settlement of Israel. The protagonist's cherished solitude is interrupted when he comes across an old, mute Arab man tending the forest. A love-hate relationship develops between the student and the Arab. The Israeli fears that the Arab, a former resident of the village, wants to avenge himself. At the same time, he finds himself oddly drawn to him. In fact, the young guard, who was appointed by the JNF to protect the forest, discovers that he is unconsciously trying to help the old man set fire to the forest. In the end, when the Arab succeeds in setting the entire forest on fire, the protagonist finds release from all his suppressed emotions.

Fire appears in a completely different context in the poem by Ephraim Sitol (which Israeli television refused to broadcast). The events of the poem take place in a living room in which four individuals are sitting: the father, the mother, the child and a Zionist soldier — i.e. the nucleus of an

A Zionist nightmare

Israel's founding myths are crumbling, writes **Abdel-Wahab El-Messiri** in the first part of a study of contemporary Israeli society as reflected in the collective Israeli imagination, published by *Al-Ahram Weekly* in two instalments. The dreams of Zionist pioneers and a land without people ring increasingly hollow, and the truth, dawning brutally, is eating away at the core of the Israeli fortress

armed settlement. A fire breaks out outside (symbolising the Intifada) and smoke begins to enter the house through the window. But the four remain transfixed before a television serial, oblivious to everything. Then they start singing:

"We are all sitting here
in our little quiet house,
sitting in comfort and cheer.
It is best that we do."
really best that we do."

The mother: "I'd say our general situation is good."

The soldier: "Or, in brief, positive."

The father: "Time is working in our favour."

The child: "If time is working, it must be burnt up by time!"

The father: "Shut up!"

The mother: "Whoever looks around us and sees, knows that your father can only speak the truth, as usual."

The father and mother: "We have shown the fire once and for all who is the man here, who's in charge."

The child: "But Papa! The house..."

The father: "Forget these illusions, don't bother us with facts."

The child and the soldier: "My slogan: 'Sit quietly, don't get worked up.'

The man: "Don't move, don't budge, don't lose your nerve."

Everyone: "That is how you fight fire."

The black humour in this poem betrays a pessimistic vision of the Zionist settlements which have rooted themselves in place ("a land without people") and denied (Arab) time. They are doomed to be consumed by the truth while the inhabitants sit quietly in the comfort of their homes, watching a television serial or listening to Zionist propaganda in complete contentment.

The Arab presence is constantly present, everywhere in the Israeli economy. The child's blackly humorous remark, "If time is 'working' then it must be an Arab," shows the consternation the issue of Arab labour arouses in the Israeli conscience. In another joke we find an old Israeli man sitting with his grandson, telling him about his memories of the past. They are leafing through a photo album. The grandfather points to a picture of himself taken in the thirties, showing him building his own house by himself. The child is startled and asks, "Were you an Arab then?" The child's reaction is natural: a deduction based not on Zionist propaganda, but on what he sees around him every day: to wit, that only Arabs work as construction labourers. Also, with regard to the importance of Arab labour in agriculture, the Israeli remarks sarcastically, "Why does the PLO keep asking for the land back with such persistence? Haven't they noticed

that the Palestinians already got it back?"

This joke is a reference to the old Zionist adage that the land belongs to those who cultivate it.

These jokes are also based on another subtext: the Israelis' knowledge that the Arabs engage in productive activities, while the Zionist settlers have turned into agents, brokers and other parasitic middlemen, or have become engaged in academic professions. This (in the Zionist conception) makes the situation of the Jews in Israel today no different than their days in the ghetto. Zionism had claimed that this warped situation was purely a product of exile in the diaspora and that once a Zionist state was created, the Jews could return to farming the land, save it (from the Arabs) and free themselves of the malignancies of exile that had given anti-Semites the pretext for the accusations they hurled against the Jews and Judaism.

The so-called "Hebrew labour" creed has developed into a "Hebrew labour complex" after this aspect of Zionism fell short of the vision. The Jews in Israel are back in the money market, in stock market speculation and in foreign exchange. In addition, increasing numbers are engaged in the academic professions and the rate of consumption in Israel keeps rising.

The Israelites use the Hebrew phrase "rosh katan" (literally: little head) to refer to the consumerist Israeli settler who thinks only of his personal interests and pleasures and is completely oblivious to any obligation he might have to the nation. In other words, the settler has a little head resting on top of a large pot-belly. A materialist, a consumer, a hedonist, for him there is no question of deferring until tomorrow the gratification that can be had today. It is behaviour fostered by a domestic policy to which the Israelis refer as TWC: supplying the public with its requirements of televisions, videos and cars. According to the Zionist dream, on the other hand, Israel was to be a ("high-voltage") light to nations; it has become, as one Israeli journal

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Managing the South

The WTO's showpiece in Singapore was the liberalisation of the global information technology market. The South, however, is likely to see almost none of the agreement's benefits, writes Faiza Rady

Held in Singapore last week, amidst much media fanfare and heavy security for the attending commerce ministers representing some 123 countries, the World Trade Organisation (WTO) conference "reached agreements on several fronts. In what was hailed as the "most far-reaching global trade accord in recent years," the trade ministers of at least 30 countries signed an accord to eliminate tariffs in the information technology market by the year 2000. The United States, Canada, the European Union (EU) and the Asian Tigers jointly account for more than 80 per cent of the world made in this sector. Despite the official back-patting, deep-seated differences continue to plague relations between the North and the South.

The North-South divide was perhaps best expressed by the divergence between the American and Bangladeshi positions on trade globalisation. In the words of WTO head Renato Ruggiero, trade liberalisation "has gone past the point of no return and needs to be accompanied by agreed and enforceable rules to protect a market which for the first time exceeds \$6,000 billion."

Pushing to eliminate tariffs protecting national telecommunications systems, acting American trade representative Charlene Barshefsky told the assembled representatives that the US accounts for nearly 50 per cent of all telecom revenues worldwide. "We cannot and will not settle for a situation where we are unable to operate in the other half of the world's markets," she stressed. The chairman of the US Federal Communication Commission, Reed Hundt, added that freeing the world telecommunications market could almost double current annual profits to \$1,000 billion. However, outside the arena of the telecom giants' manoeuvring, it is estimated that two-thirds of the world's population have never made a phone call and that one-half live more than a two-day walk from the nearest telephone.

Barshefsky aggressively preached increased liberalisation, promising that the removal of tariffs would lower consumer prices, make businesses more competitive and ultimately promote industrial growth. Bangladeshi Trade Minister Tofael Ahmed disagreed, claiming that many of the world's 48 least developed countries (LDCs) faced a "crisis of confidence" in Northern globalisation. "[In the 1980s] in spite of the lurking fears that liberalisation might overwhelm them through a surge in imports, LDCs adopted liberalisation, prompted mainly by the hopes of a better future," explained Ahmed, adding that such hopes were never realised. Instead, in the 1990s, the LDCs' share in global exports and imports fell by 50 per cent and 30 per cent respectively — down from the already meagre levels of 0.6 per cent and 1.0 per cent.

The South is unlikely to benefit much from the conference's showpiece, the much-touted information technology agreement. Most conference analysts believe that profits from the high-tech deal will mainly be pocketed by US and Asian transnationals. Exports from both Asia and the US to Europe are expected to double over the next five years. Consequently, the US and the Asian Tigers boasted over capturing the largest slice of the \$600 billion information technology market, leaving the South out in the cold — with no apparent reason to rejoice.

Commenting on the marginalisation of the South in this crucial sector, Egyptian trade expert Magda Shabir said that the bulk of information technology exchanges have so far been restricted to trade between Canada, the EU, Japan and the US, while the developing countries' improved access to information networks "is becoming increasingly doubtful."

Prominent political analyst Noam Chomsky noted that the US, in particular, has much to gain from consolidating its monopoly in the information market. It is vital for American interests "to ensure that US-based corporations control the technology of the future, including biotechnology, which it is hoped will allow private enterprise to control health and agriculture, and the means of life generally," wrote Chomsky. He added that the South would then be "permanently locked into dependence on high-priced Northern products." Recently published studies tend to confirm Chomsky's argument. According to US International Trade Commission estimates, American companies are likely to gain an annual \$61 billion from the Third World if they succeed in controlling the information technology market.

As a result of the LDCs' crisis of confidence, Third World countries remained on guard in Singapore and refused to sign the much-contested Multilateral Investment Agreement (MIA). Devised by the US and the EU, the MIA was shelved for the time being and put on the WTO agenda for further negotiations. Many experts agree that the MIA is probably the single most detrimental feature of the WTO agenda — mainly because it institutionalises globalisation. "Globalising the economy ultimately means transforming the fundamental macro-economic and social policies of countries of the South into a single monocultural laissez-faire economic model that would be competitive with the long-term requirements of the Northern-dominated world economy," said Martin Khor, director of Third World Network, a Malaysian-based non-government development organisation which had observer status in Singapore.

Critics of the WTO believe that the proposed MIA would effect the permanent transformation of Third World economies. This is because the MIA grants transnational corporations and other investors the absolute right to establish themselves in any country they choose and in any sector of the economy — with the possible exception of defence.

Under this agreement, it would be unlawful for a government to prevent a potential foreign

investor from setting up shop on its soil, even if this government believes that such investment conflicts with the nation's economic interests. Moreover, once the investor establishes himself, the government has to offer him all the facilities, services and incentives that it provides its own nationals and other foreign companies.

In addition, the foreign investor's rights would be supported and enforced by the sanction-based dispute-settlement mechanism of the WTO. Accordingly, any country, claiming violation of the WTO investment rules, would be empowered to retaliate against an alleged perpetrator. The mechanism could function as a powerful political deterrent, especially if retaliation by Northern nations replays the scenarios of the US trade embargo against Cuba, the former siege of Nicaragua, or the economic blockade of Libya and Iraq.

At the end of the day, the WTO aims to invest national governments of any semblance of sovereignty. "The total effect of the [WTO] rules will be to give the rights of transnational corporations priority over the judgements of governments as to what kind of investment is suitable for the developmental needs of their countries. In effect, the MIA seeks to enshrine in law the free, unregulated entry and undirected operations of transnational corporations in African economies," Ghanaian development specialist Tembi Hormeku-Ajei told *Al-Ahram* Weekly in a telephone interview.

Other intellectuals believe that transnationals are already in control through the mediation of Third World political establishments. In the words of a report by the non-governmental South Commission, chaired by former Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere, "the most powerful countries in the North have become a de facto board of management for the world economy, protecting their interests and imposing their will on the South." It is a sombre but real reading of the WTO strategy.

Labour games

The South held out against linking trade and labour standards in WTO's ministerial declaration, reports Gamil Ibrahim from Geneva

The South has long been suspicious of the motives of Western nations that want control on labour conditions in the poorer, less developed countries of the Third World. The countries of the South are anxious that such controls might be used as a pretext to impose trade sanctions and erect artificial market barriers to protect the North against expanding exports from the South. The United States and a number of other Western nations raised the question of labour standards and what have now become known as "social clauses" at several international gatherings prior to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) ministerial meeting that took place in Singapore last week. Egypt, together with many other Third World countries, has long resisted moves by Western nations to link trade and labour standards.

Mourad Zahrani, Egypt's ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva, who headed the Egyptian delegation at the Singapore meeting, stated categorically: "The labour standards issue is the concern of the International Labour Office (ILO) in Geneva and should not be on the agenda when discussing trade issues at WTO meetings. The international community must not link labour standards issues and free trade concerns. The latter falls within the WTO domain; labour standards issues are for the ILO to decide."

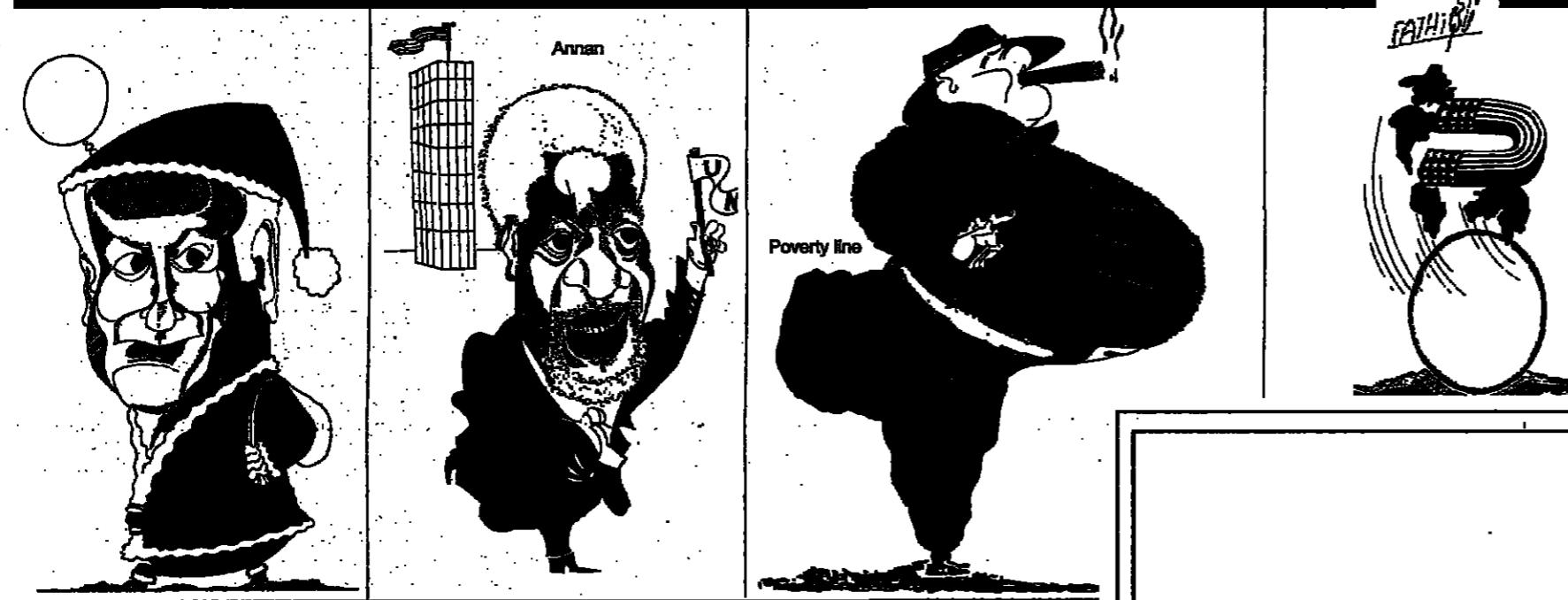
Malaysian Trade Minister Rafidah Aziz put it even more bluntly. "As far as we are concerned, labour standards have no place in the WTO. Period," she said.

On the South's insistence, the WTO was not given the mandate to link trade and workers' protection. The South believes that such issues as labour standards were brought up as a prelude to the imposition of tariffs on imports from the Third World where labour standards are alleged to be lower than those in the West. The West sees low wages and child and prison labour as forms of unfair trade advantages. The Third World nations managed to stop the ILO director-general from participating at the Singapore meeting.

Egypt and several other Third World nations battled with the US and other Western nations that argued for the imposition of trade restrictions on products from Third World countries which have low labour standards. Indeed, the Singapore ministerial declaration stated: "We [the participating ministers] renew our commitment to the observance of internationally recognised labour standards. The ILO is the competent body to set and deal with these standards and we affirm our support for its work in promoting them. We reject the use of labour standards for protectionist purposes, and agree that the comparative advantage of countries, particularly low-wage developing countries, must in no way be put into question. In this regard, we note that the WTO and ILO secretariats will continue their existing collaboration."

The exclusion of any link between labour standards and free trade in the ministerial declaration was interpreted as a defeat for the West. Observers believe that the wording of the final declaration, in fact, points to a compromise. That the matter was raised in the first place indicates that many countries feared an American veto and wanted to placate the US. However, the declaration stressed the cooperation between the WTO and ILO secretariats and as such was considered a victory for the developing countries of the South. It emphasised that the ILO was the proper forum for discussing labour standards.

At preparatory meetings in Geneva for the WTO Singapore gathering, the US and other Western nations pressed for the inclusion of Western multinationals in discussions about the privatisation of government procurements in Third World countries. Here again, Third World nations rejected Western demands. The matter was mentioned in the Singapore ministerial declaration: "We agreed to establish a working group to conduct a study on transparency in government procurement practices, taking into account national policies, and based on this study, to develop elements for inclusion in an appropriate agreement." Again the South managed to block US manoeuvres and postpone discussions on a sensitive issue.



China in space

Zhang Dan reports on China's space industry and how its expansion strengthens Beijing's hand and international standing

China's space industry and its counterparts in Europe have broken the ice. In May, it won a contract from Germany Aerospace Corporation to launch in 1997 a German-made communications satellite ordered by Argentina. China's commercial launch service thus entered the European market for the first time.

One month after signing the contract, Liu Jiyun, president of China Aerospace Corporation (CASC), visited France and Germany and met almost all key figures in the space industry in Europe.

The most encouraging message he received in the visit was from France, the leader in the European space alliance, which used to be a bitter rival of China's space industry and accused China of "dumping" in the international market for selling launch services at "unfair low prices." During the visit, France agreed to discuss with China the possible opening of the European launch service market. The ArianeSpace Corporation of Europe even proposed to discuss with China the issue of joint market exploration of international commercial launch services. Further talks on this issue will begin soon.

Luo Ge, vice-director of the Department of Foreign Affairs of the Chinese State Aerospace Bureau, said that the change of attitude by the European space industry toward China may bring about a "new era" of technological and commercial cooperation between the two sides.

He said China's big market potential contributed to the European's change of attitude. "They predict that about 200 satellites will be needed in the next few decades. My only worry is whether enough orbits can be found," Luo said. "China has really big market potential, but if others close their door to us, we won't let them in either."

Exchanges between China and Europe in the space technology and commercial field started a decade ago. After China announced in 1985 that it would provide international commercial launches, the Matra company of France in 1987 entrusted China's Great Wall Industrial Corporation (GWIC), China's international launch contractor, with a recovery operation. But France's willingness to cooperate with China decreased after 1989.

The attitude of Germany has been more flexible. In 1985, China bought some components from Germany to build its high-capacity Dongfanghong-3 communications satellite. The expensive satellite failed to reach its orbit, however, when it was launched in November 1994.

In 1993, CAC and Germany Aerospace Corporation set up a joint-venture company, Euruspace GmbH. A high-tech communications satellite built by the company will be used by China's financial and banking systems to transmit and process data. CAC President Liu Jiyun said that making the high-tech satellite would enhance China's satellite technology. Recent reports suggest that the project may receive support from France.

Luo Ge said that China's solid space industry basis backed up its cooperation with countries advanced in the field. China's space industry started in the 1950s. In 1956 the Soviet Union began to provide China with assistance, but the help stopped in 1960 when relations between the two nations soured. In the following two decades, China had to work on its own. The Chinese people were proud of their rockets and satellites being 100 per cent made in China. "That didn't mean we needed no international aid or cooperation. It was the blockade by the outside world that forced us to be [self-reliant]," Luo Ge said.

The situation began to change at the end of the 1970s when China started its reform programme and began to have extensive technological exchanges with other countries. In the past four decades, China has developed a full array of Long March carrier rockets, the various models of which have carried out 37 flights and propelled 44 satellites into outer space. Six of the satellites are foreign-made.

So far, China has signed governmental agreements on space cooperation with France, Germany, Britain, Russia, India, Brazil and Italy. A governmental agreement was signed in Beijing last year widening the scope of the two nations' cooperation to almost all aspects related to space exploration, including the possibility of making an advanced communications satellite for Brazil.

Since 1992, China has cooperated with India, a rising space power, on researching the use of satellites in telecommunications, meteorology and natural disasters. Technical exchanges are also going on between China and Thailand, Indonesia and South Korea.

According to Luo Ge, cooperation between China and other developing countries aims at "meeting each other's needs." "We help others in overcoming their weak points with our technological strong points, and vice versa," he said. "For example, India does a better job in the research of meteorological and communications satellite technology. We can learn from them. India buys China's satellite space parts."

China is trying to promote the formation of an alliance of Asian-Pacific space powers. China was one of the countries sponsoring the Asia-Pacific Conference on Multilateral Cooperation in Space Technology and Applications in 1992. Since then, sessions have been convened successively in China, Thailand and Pakistan. Representatives of the 16 countries attending all agreed that such a conference can be the prototype for an Asian-Pacific regional aerospace organisation.

According to CAC spokesman Zhang Lin, space industry cooperation and business in the Asia-Pacific area will help the regional economy prosper. The nations of the region should thus work together for a common future.

Among the six foreign satellites China has launched, four were built by the Hughes Space and Communications International of the US. In a recent communiqué on the results of investigations into the failure last January of a Chinese

The writer is a journalist with China Features.

Edited by Gamal Nkrumah

REAL CLASS



ALWAYS SHOWS

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Human development scrutinised

IMF-inspired economic reform policies have negatively affected the living standard of most Egyptians, concludes a report on human resource development. **Gamal Essam El-Din** reviews the report's findings

"The IMF-inspired economic reform and structural adjustment policies have consistently led to slowing down economic growth rates in Egypt in such a way that average rate of growth of GDP per capita dropped to less than 1 per cent in the last three years and that 19 million of the Egyptian people, a third of the population, now live under the poverty line," a 144-page Shura Council report entitled *Human Development as a Basis for Economic Growth* said this week.

The report, prepared by the Council's Human Resource Development and Local Administration Committee, provides a review of human development conditions in Egypt for the year 1995. It relies in its conclusions on a number of surveys conducted by the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Egypt's Institute of National Planning.

According to the report, the concept of human development was coined for the first time in 1990 by UNDP to encompass all aspects of human development in the

world. The report defines "human development" as the process of developing human capacities by providing human beings with the resources necessary for improving their lives, such as access to good education and the means to maintain a healthy life.

Human development and economic prosperity are generally gauged by indicators on life expectancy, health and nutrition conditions, literacy levels, education and per capita rate of GDP growth. Drawing on statistics from the UNDP report, Egypt comes in position 107 out of 174 countries, up from position 173 in 1994. The Shura report also stated that in Egypt, life expectancy is 63.3 years, literacy level among the adult population is 49.1 per cent and per capita share of GDP is \$3,540.

The Shura Council report paid special attention to the role of the IMF-inspired economic reform policies implemented in the early 1990s to determine their impact on human development in Egypt. According to the report, even though these

policies have achieved several economic and financial successes, such as cutting inflation rates down to 7.5 per cent of GDP by June 1996 and raising growth rates to 4.5 per cent at present, these policies have failed to ensure equitable access to basic services. More specifically, the IMF-inspired liberalisation policies were achieved at the expense of a concrete growth in productivity rates and real incomes. "Economic growth should not be considered an objective in itself, but should rather be a tool for achieving man's welfare and prosperity," the report stated.

Worse still, the report contended, the World Bank-inspired structural adjustment programmes have led to a slowing down in economic growth between 1990 and 1995 and raised unemployment rates because of lay-offs in public sector companies. "Although the Social Development Fund was established by the state to alleviate the severity of these policies, the state should take other urgent initiatives to deal with the adverse effects of these policies," the re-

port contended. Since the IMF-inspired economic reform policies were adopted by Egypt in May 1990, the number of illiterate adults has risen while the quality of health services have deteriorated. "Illiteracy rates rose from 16 million in 1990 to 17.5 million in 1993 while close to 3 million children have dropped out of basic school registration," the report said. In health terms, the report added, a third of Egyptian children of pre-school age suffer from growth problems, while clean drinking water has yet to be available to a fifth of the urban population and to two-fifths of the rural population.

The three-day debate in the Council showed that Shura members are highly divided over the conclusions reached by the report on the role of government efforts and economic reform policies on human development in Egypt. While the report was criticised by some as painting a gloomy picture, it was highly praised by others as presenting a balanced and re-

alistic picture, taking into account both the negative and positive effects of government efforts in human development.

Shura member Nazli Muawad, a professor of economics at Cairo University's Faculty of Economics and Political Sciences, criticised the report for adopting the UNDP's concept of human development. "This concept is just one of several other concepts adopted by the United States and the Western world in a new world order," said Muawad. According to her, these concepts "are just old water poured into new bottles". In other words, she added, human development as defined by these Western concepts is based on market economics, Western democracy and the espousing of the social values of Western civilisation, especially the American lifestyle. "But in Egypt we have two centuries of experience in human development, ranging from Mohamed Ali in the 19th century to Gamal Abdel-Nasser in the 20th, which we should stick to and make use of." For these reasons, she emphasised, human development

in the nineties and the next century should be based less on foreign loans and grants and more on local investments and Egyptian values.

All Lutfi, former prime minister, praised the report and described it as "bold and frank" in speaking about the negative and positive aspects of human development efforts. He agreed that economic reform policies have led to social inequality and income distortions. "This is why the government should take urgent measures to reduce taxes on limited-income brackets and to redistribute more fairly government spending in favour of increased social services," said Lutfi.

Mohamed Zaki Abu Amer, minister of state for parliamentary affairs, emphasised that the government gives its utmost attention to human development, especially in education and health services. He also criticised the report for ignoring the efforts exerted to improve the living conditions of women, especially those led by Mrs Suzanne Mubarak.

Unsettled Gulf War spin-off

Though some reparations have been decided for victims of the Gulf War, the UNCC still lacks the funds to make good on its promises, writes **Walid Abdel-Nasser**

One United Nations agency that celebrated the actual implementation of the Security Council's food-for-oil Resolution 986 (1995) was the United Nations Compensation Commission (UNCC), an organ of the Security Council that was established in the aftermath of the second Gulf War (1990-1991). It was set up to compensate individuals, corporations, governments and international organisations that suffered "direct loss or damage resulting from Iraq's unlawful invasion and occupation of Kuwait."

The commission has so far completed two full categories of individual claims for compensation: "A", for those who were forced to leave Iraq or Kuwait during Iraq's occupation of Kuwait, and "B" for individuals who suffered severe personal injury or the death of a relative.

Compensation awards for 862,000 successful "A" claims, worth \$3.2 billion, were issued by the Commission's Governing Council but were unpaid due to a lack of financial resources prior to the implementation of Resolution 986. On the other hand, and due to their limited volume and value, around 4,000 successful "B" claims were paid a total of \$13.4 million. The funds for this category came from a release of 30 per cent of Iraq's oil-related revenue, which had been frozen, and from voluntary contributions. Both these sources of financing were authorised under Security Council Resolution 778 of 1992.

The Governing Council adopted, at its 23rd session (16-17 December 1996), the fourth report of the Panel of Commissioners on category "C" claims (for individual loss of income less than \$100,000). This category is the third and last category of expedited humanitarian claims categories. With this instalment, the commission would be finalising work on slightly more than half the total number of claims submitted under this category. The total value of these claims is \$1.6 billion.

Resolution 986 would make available to the UNCC for the next six months a sum of \$1.00 million per month, representing 30 per cent of Iraqi oil sales revenues as stipulated in Security Council Resolutions 705 (1991) and 986 (1995). This amount will definitely fall short of covering all awards issued or to be issued in the coming months. However, the payment of substantial amounts of compensation will, in itself, revive hopes in the hearts of millions of claimants that justice is being rendered. Moreover, Resolution 986 contains a built-in mechanism for review that allows an increase in the amount of oil to be exported by Iraq, thereby increasing the share of UNCC.

The UNCC still faces the difficult task of resolving the more complicated claims belonging to categories "D" (individual loss of income more than \$100,000), "E" (corporate losses) and "F" (governmental, international organisations and environmental losses).

IMF paints rosy picture

An IMF report forecasts better economic conditions for developing countries during the coming year. **Niveen Wahish** reviews the report

Dividing the world into three main groups — industrial countries, developing countries and countries in transition — the October edition of the World Economic Outlook report (WEO), which is published bi-annually by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), offers a comprehensive look at the patterns of economic growth and development around the globe.

In the report, the category of industrial countries includes the seven largest nations in terms of GDP, as well as the 15 members of the European Union. Developing countries are listed according to region: Africa, Asia, the Middle East and the Western Hemisphere. Countries in Europe were classified as countries in transition, with the exception of Cyprus, Malta, and Turkey which were included with developing countries.

In evaluating the situation in developing countries, the report notes that "despite the growing number of success stories, many countries continue to struggle with macroeconomic imbalances and structural impediments that keep their living standards well below what they are potentially capable of achieving."

It also points out that while market forces are increasing in strength and influence, public sector industries are still hampering the development of a private sector in many of these countries. It adds, however, that the industrial output of the developing world increased by six per cent in 1995, and the average inflation rate dropped to

20 per cent. In 1996, aggregate growth is expected to rise at the same pace, while inflation is expected to decrease in most countries.

Spotlighting Egypt, the report points out that it has made considerable progress in deregulating its economy and liberalising foreign trade. Moreover, the report highlights the fact that the government's reform programme is moving forward with the privatisation of state-owned entities, the strengthening of the financial sector and attempts to improve the taxation system in order to enable the country "to grow at a faster pace." Within the same context, the report said that Egypt was one of three countries that recently received large private capital flows at a time when capital flows to most countries in Africa and the Middle East are still through governmental channels.

These reforms, states the report, are expected to raise Egypt's output in 1996 by about four per cent, the highest rate of growth since 1987. However, since the report was written, mentioning in its pages that an agreement in principle was reached in late July with the IMF on financial support for a package of policy reforms, changes have been under way. The agreement was concluded with the IMF, writing off a \$4 billion debt as the completion of the third tranche of a 50 per cent debt write-off awarded to Egypt in 1991 when it first embarked on a comprehensive economic structural adjustment programme.

On the regional level, the report said that economic performance varied among the countries of the Middle East. Jordan and Israel, for example, are experiencing what the WEO report describes as a "strong expansion". In Jordan, the report stated that "prudent monetary and fiscal policies should continue to promote robust growth with low inflation over the next year." However, Israel is attempting to avoid the "over-heating" expected to accompany its strengthened policies and increased capital inflows, which have been stimulated by prior gains realised on the path to regional stability.

Oil producing countries including Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, according to the report, are adjusting to the decreased price of oil. And although fiscal deficits are being reduced, these countries need to take additional measures to further reduce public expenditure so as to be able to contain the increase in the level of public debt.

On the global level, the report pointed out that in 1995, the growth of the world's output stood at 3.5 per cent. At the time, economic expansion was minimal in many industrial countries and developing countries of the West. However, the growth rate was greatest in sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East. In 1996, this figure, forecasts the report, will rise to 3.75 per cent and, by 1997, to four per cent. It added that in Africa and the Middle East, the situation is expected to improve more dramatically.

Focusing on other key indicators, the report noted that economic growth, on a global scale, is expected to average around 6.5 per cent in the medium-term, provided that adjustment and reform programmes and capital inflows continue at their present levels. Inflation is expected to remain stable in industrial countries, but will decline in developing countries and countries in transition.

In looking at the world trade of goods and services, writers of the report conclude that although recessions during the early 1990s in industrial countries have led to a lower demand on imports, this was offset by the increase in activity and imports, especially of capital goods, in developing countries. This demand, in 1995 in particular, helped boost world trade at a time when demand for imported goods in Europe declined. "Growth in world trade is expected to remain buoyant in 1996 and 1997," noted the report.

On the topic of debt settlements, the report said that the burden of external debt for developing countries is projected to decline in 1996-97. It pointed out that since May 1996, a number of countries have completed debt-service agreements, or are now out of debt with official and commercial creditors. Thus, the drop in the external debt-servicing burden of developing countries will free resources for the improvement of the infrastructure and welfare investments.

BCCI refunds

FIVE years following the collapse of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI), thousands of the bank's depositors hope to be partially refunded in the near future.

According to Wagih Shindy, former minister of investment and international cooperation and head of the Finance, Business and Legal Experts Group which is responsible for the refunding operation, nearly 25,000 former depositors from 130 countries will receive a total of \$1.35 billion in compensation. This figure represents about 15 per cent of the collapsed bank's total deposits, which are estimated to be in the range of \$9 billion.

This move follows the success of liquidators in obtaining compensation from the main shareholders of the bank in the United Arab Emirates. In addition, funds have also been obtained from the liquidation of the bank's assets and court rulings in favour of the bank in the US. Other compensation funds have come from some Arab businessmen who were shareholders in the bank.

An agreement has been reached with the Abu Dhabi government stipulating that liquidators receive \$1,800 billion in compensation. US authorities also allowed the transfer of \$243 million after the liquidation of one of the US institutions funded by the bank.

Market report

GMI reaches for the sky

THE GENERAL Market Index (GMI) has maintained its steady increase during the week ending 12 December, gaining 9.02 points to close at 287.76. However, the volume of trading plummeted to LE278.3 million compared to LE512.6 million the week before.

This week, Heliopolis Housing and Urbanisation (HHU) was

LE140. Also in the manufacturing sector, shares of Ameriya Pharmaceutical Industries gained LE29 to close at LE515, while those of the Arab Aluminium Company continued on their two-week upswing to gain LE8 and close at LE48.

After a strong week of trading, the financial sector's index shot up by 14.75 to close at 389.95 points

as shares of the Misr Exterior Bank, increasing in value for the second week in a row, gained LE35 to close at LE785.

Back in the manufacturing sector, shares of the Kalf El-Zayat Pesticides and Chemicals company led the way for the 34 companies whose shares decreased in value. The company's stock fell by 12.5 per cent and closed at LE70, while that of the Upper Egypt Mills company lost 3.3 per cent of its opening price and closed at LE48.

Out of the 40 companies whose shares increased in value this week, Cairo Housing and Urbanisation recorded the greatest jump, as its shares rose in value by 59 per cent to close at LE20.3.

Similarly, shares of the Paints and Chemical Industries Company realised an impressive LE51.28 per share increase before levelling off at LE68.75. The financial sector's Commercial International Bank (CIB) also had a less-than-stellar week as its shares fell by LE6 to LE48.5.

Edited by **Ghada Ragab**

Lisez

Plan du gouvernement
Une accélération des réformes attendue

Conférence de l'OMC à Singapour
Les pays du Sud ont fait front

Kofi Annan à l'Onu
L'Afrique sauve sa tête

Le président afghan Rabbani
Contre les Talibans s'est créée une nouvelle alliance régionale

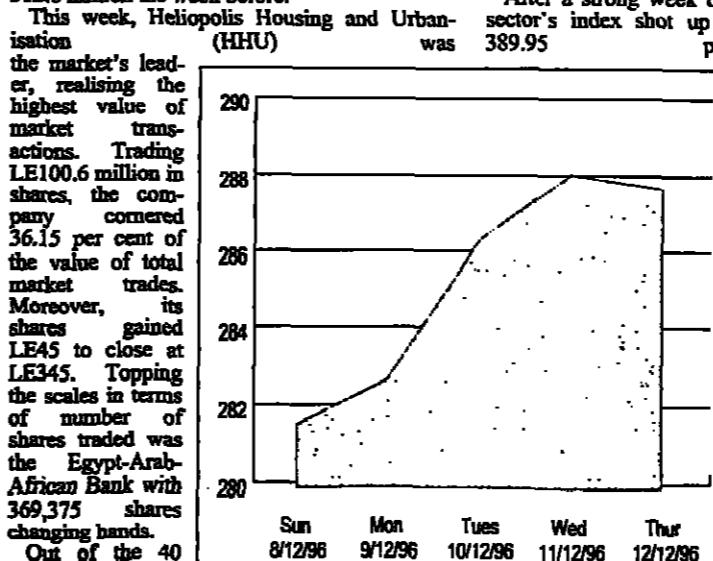
Prédicateurs des mosquées
À la recherche de la juste voix

Zamalek, vainqueur de la Coupe des champions
Un géant d'Afrique

Rédacteur en Chef
Exécutif

Mohamed Salmawy

Président et Rédacteur en Chef
Ibrahim Nafie



مكتبة من الأصل

Al-Ahram: A Diwan of contemporary life

During the first 25 years of its existence, Al-Ahram served as an important bridge between the East and West, as is evidenced by the amount of space it devoted to events on the other side of the Mediterranean; indeed around the world.

Frequently, the newspaper would feature reports from its correspondents abroad. Early on in its history, its owner and director, Bishar Taqla, set the tradition of touring European capitals in order to provide first-hand coverage of major events. It was a tradition he continued to follow until his death in 1901. Another section of Al-Ahram, generally located on the third page, was called "Public and Private Telegrams" which featured selections from international news agencies that would be of interest to its readers. Last but not least was a relatively permanent fixture in Al-Ahram. Taking up not an inconsiderable space of the front page and sometimes overflowing onto the second was the column "Mail from Europe".

"Mail from Europe" offered selections from European newspapers and magazines. Apart from articles taken from the French press, the column featured selections from the British press, with particular attention to the London Times due to its reputation for credibility. Al-Ahram also frequently published selections from the German, Austrian, Italian and Greek press, which meant that from its earliest years a considerable portion of its work was devoted to translation.

It is interesting to note that "Mail from Europe" took up a considerably greater amount of space in the earlier years of the newspaper. During these sensitive nascent years, Al-Ahram had to be careful to avoid embroiling itself directly in domestic issues, particularly in what it referred to as "politics". It was therefore safer to leave the European newspapers to speak on its behalf. However, after Egypt fell under British occupation, Al-Ahram no longer feared engaging directly in politics since it enjoyed the legal protection of the French Consulate and the moral protection of the general nationalist climate. Nevertheless, that Egypt was ruled by one European power — Great Britain — which was an arch rival of another European power — France — lent "Mail from Europe" a special status.

A quick comparison between Al-Ahram and the other major Arabic language newspapers of the epoch — Al-Maqatib and Al-Mu'tiyid which appeared in 1889, and Al-Liwa' which appeared in 1900 — demonstrates that our newspaper provided the most important bridge to the outside world. Al-Mu'tiyid, with its Ottoman orientation, was primarily drawn to events surrounding the Supreme Porte. The pro-British Al-Maqatib devoted the bulk of its space to issues suggested to it by the occupation authorities or to defending the occupation against the nationalists. As for Al-Liwa', it followed the strictly nationalist line of its owner and founder Mustafa Kamel and it was only logical that it would concern itself with external

events only insofar as they served its interests.

As this important link to Europe broadened, its content became increasingly varied. In spite of its title, it was not solely preoccupied with the rapid return of events on that continent, see, for example, the objective was to highlight the important reports that appeared in European newspapers, regardless of whether or not they were related to events in Europe. As a consequence, readers found themselves transported variously from Europe to the Far East or to Latin America. Closer to home, the column featured selections from the European press that had direct bearings on the growing European aspirations in the Middle East during a crucial era of imperialist expansion. Nor did Al-Ahram overlook in its selections the human interest stories with which it would tantalise its readers from time to time. Indeed, this is an appropriate starting point with which to begin our tour of Al-Ahram's "Mail from Europe" column.

"Royal families" was a subject that was sure to attract the reader's interest, particularly in light of the fact that the monarchial system still prevailed in most European countries: Great Britain, Germany, Austria, Italy, Russia, Belgium, Holland, Sweden and Norway. The following two stories illustrate the type of articles featured in this category.

The first pertains to Queen Victoria, who one day was reviewing the troops in the company of one of her granddaughters. "The young princess would cast her eye at length upon some of the officers of the guards in spite of the reproachful glances of her grandmother directed at her. The princess had been toyng with a handkerchief when suddenly a gust of wind blew it from her hand on to the ground. Immediately four officers rushed forward to attempt to restore it to its owner. The queen, however, ordered the officers to leave the handkerchief as it was and turned to the princess and told her to bend down and pick it up herself. As the princess did as she was told, her face was red with shame and anger."

On 13 February 1901, "Mail from Europe" offered its readers a delightful account of the wedding ceremonies of Wilhelm, the queen of Holland. On the first day, the queen issued a pardon for all those sentenced to prison for having committed murder, but who had continued to protest their innocence. The following day, she received the delegations of kings and statesmen who had come to attend the ceremonies. The article goes on to describe the elegant banquet attended by visiting royal and ambassadorial delegations and the play that was staged for the queen.

Much as our contemporary newspapers do, the editor of the "Mail from Europe" column would, from time to time, select sensational stories of events on the other side of the Mediterranean. Under the heading, "Accident in Rome," Al-Ahram reports that on 13 August 1901 a train stalled at a distance of 12km from the Ital-

ian capital. "The engineer sent out one of the conductors to warn the train that was due to arrive after them. But, the driver of the following train did not receive the warning and crashed into the stalled train, crushing its carriages. Fifteen were killed and four were wounded. When news of the accident reached the king and queen, they along with other members of the court, rushed to the scene in order to tend to the injured."

Al-Ahram also entertained its readers with the curiosities of European habits and customs which would sometimes invoke the newspaper's admiration and at others its disapprobation. The newspaper was greatly impressed by "the Greek banker, Sancros, who bequeathed all his assets to charitable activities. We have read in recent newspapers that the man, who wrote his will in his own hand, placed most of his considerable wealth, which amounted to 30 million drachmas, in trust for charitable institutions. Of this amount he allocated three million to building schools, courts and improving prisons. He allocated another sum for the construction of bakeries to produce cheap bread in Athens, and a third amount to the founding of charitable institutions. This great benefactor was buried at government expense and the royal family marched in his funeral cortège. People were unanimous in their praise and mourning for the man."

The newspaper was also struck by that intimate relationship between the British and their animals. As an illustration of this idiosyncrasy, it cited Lord Roberts who after returning from the war in Afghanistan

praised the valour and courage of his horse that Queen Victoria bestowed the Medal of Kabul upon the noble steed, personally handing the medal around its neck. She also conferred the Victoria Medal of Good Conduct upon two dogs. This drew both admiration and surprise from Al-Ahram.

Other customs were not so deserving of Al-Ahram's approbation. On one occasion, for example, it directed its scorn against the superstitions that some Europeans still clung to particularly in eastern parts of the continent.

In similar vein, Al-Ahram condemned the practice of some European newspapers to publish astrologers' "predictions" for the new year. Nevertheless, this attitude did not prevent Al-Ahram from relaying these predictions even if it did prefact it with the religious injunction, "Astrologers tell not the truth, even if their predictions turn true."

While some European social customs struck wonder and others provoked censure, unqualified praise was reserved for the latest scientific discoveries and inventions in the developed world. The newspaper was particularly impressed by an American device that could transmit sound to a range of 25 miles. It was also impressed by a new armoured vehicle invented in Italy.

Further in this line of human interest, "Mail from Europe" covers the first attempt to cross the English Channel. This took place in 1898 when the Englishman, Frank Holme, set off from the British coastline. His brother accompanied him in

a boat. "He was carrying food and could rescue him if the need arose." On two occasions, the passing ships attempted to stop and rescue what they thought was a drowning man; however, the brother warned them off. "At 2 o'clock, Frank decided to have a bite to eat and his brother handed him a bottle filled with warm milk and a bit of pressed meat. Later, the brother tried to convince Frank to give up, but Frank was adamant about pressing on until the end. However, as they approached the French coast, the brother discovered that it was blanketed in such a thick fog that he was convinced that Frank might get lost and that he would be unable to save him. He prevailed upon Frank to get into the boat and Frank agreed."

The procession of uninterrupted news in the "Mail from Europe" provides a detailed panorama of international political conditions at the turn of the century. One segment of this portrait is related to events in Europe itself which was in the grip of two concerns. The first was the spectre of the anarchist movements that had claimed several crowned heads of state. The second was the romantic notion, championed by the Russian tsar, that it was possible to create a permanent peace in the war-plagued continent.

The issue of anarchism was ignited by the assassination of the Italian King Umberto in 1900. It was with particular interest that Al-Ahram covered the trial of the assassin. Al-Ahram followed the news of anarchist everywhere. From Russia, the column reported that the police had arrested 30 students in Kiev, 16 of whom were sentenced to death. "When the court pronounced its verdict, the condemned refused to petition for mercy to the tsar who pardoned them anyway in spite of their obduracy."

From Austria the newspaper reports, beneath the headline "Anarchists!" on the arrest of port workers in Pula on the Adriatic who had planned on blowing up the Austrian fleet anchored in the port. Tsar Nikolai II's idealistic appeal for European peace was launched in September 1898 in a manifesto in which he pleads for human compassion and disarmament. From Spain, the column reported that the police had arrested 30 students in Kiev, 16 of whom were sentenced to death. "When the court pronounced its verdict, the condemned refused to petition for mercy to the tsar who pardoned them anyway in spite of their obduracy."

The Far East was another corner of the panorama of international conditions depicted by "Mail from Europe." At the forefront of news from these quarters was China, the object of rival European rivaling imperial aspirations of the period. The column also followed the stream of news emanating from China at the end of

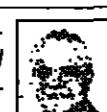
1900 on the Boxer Rebellion and the massive European intervention to quell it, leading to the destruction of Peking. The newspaper featured a traveller's first-hand description of the Chinese capital in the wake of battle. The city had turned into piles of rubble and remnants of homes and palaces the sight of which weighs heavily on the heart of the beholder."

"Mail from Europe" would hardly be likely to ignore events closer to home in the Arab world, extending from the Gulf to the Atlantic Ocean. An item from Muscat reported great popular anxiety and agitation in the Omani capital because the British consul "had erected a pole in front of his residence from which he flew the British flag, which the people interpreted as a sign that Great Britain had staked a claim to ownership." From Kuwait on 24 April 1902, it reports that instructions were given to British warships to head toward Kuwait after the government had learned that French and Russian battleships had docked there. A third item, this time from Rome, announced that Italian newspapers were predicting that Italian forces would soon be launching an expedition against Tripoli (Libya). Taken together, the three items portray the ongoing tempest that swept over the Arab world and that subsided only after most of it had fallen into the hands of the European powers.

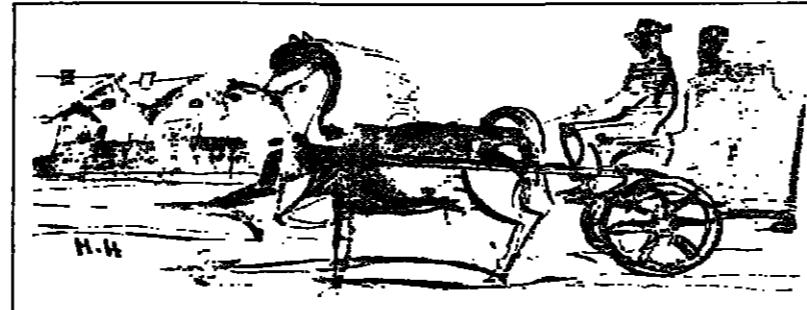
Some of the most interesting items in "Mail from Europe" of that era were those items related to the US, which, at the time, was in the process of acquiring an international garb that would reflect the size of this growing world power. As Al-Ahram indicates, Washington was extending itself in two domains: Latin America and the Philippines, both at the expense of Spain. It is no coincidence that at the turn of the century, most of Spain's colonies were erupting into revolution. Within a single year, 1898, its colonies in Chile, Cuba and the Philippines were ablaze in uprisings.

Following the reports in Al-Ahram, one notes that the scenario was virtually the same: A popular revolution erupts against Spain. When the revolutionaries, receiving encouragement from the US, make some gains, Madrid attempts to suppress them with the harshness it had habitually used in its colonies. The American forces move in on the pretext of protecting the revolutionaries, cutting off communications between Spain and its overseas possessions. Eventually, Spain gives in and relinquishes its former colonies, creating conditions in favour of the American presence. It was the recurrence of scenarios such as these at the end of the last century that paved the way for the emergence of the world's primary superpower at the end of this century.

The author is a professor of history and head of Al-Ahram History Studies Centre.



of existence, it carried a permanent front-page section for foreign news, dubbed 'Mail from Europe', which sometimes spilled over onto the second page. Despite the title, that section was not confined to Europe but also covered news from the Arab world, the Far East, the United States and Latin America. In this instalment of his Diwan chronicles, Dr Yunan Labib Rizk samples some of the foreign news items that Al-Ahram judged to be worthy of publication

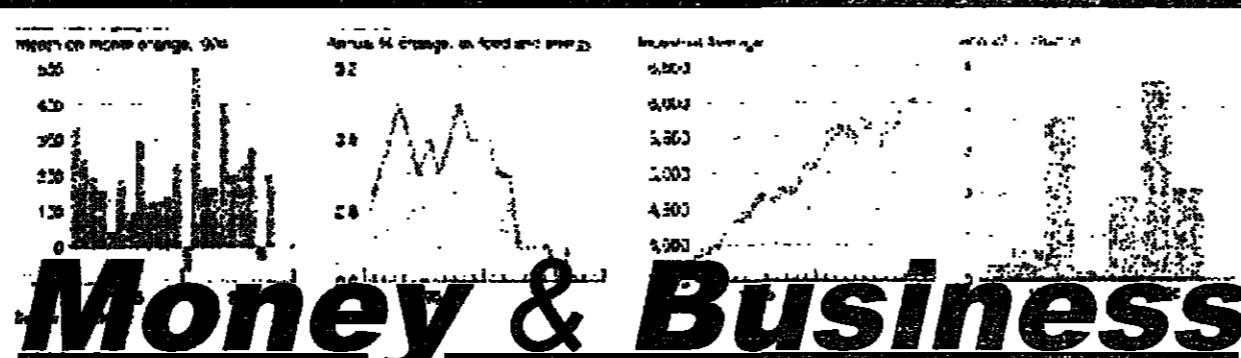


NBE and Banque Misr among sponsors

IBM, Xerox, Hewlett Packard, ETS and Blue Max Computer, will be joined by Banque Misr and the National Bank of Egypt (NBE) in the year's Al-Ahram Computer Exhibition, which will coincide with the International Conference on Artificial Intelligence.

The exhibition will take place from 27 February until 2 March 1997 at the Semiramis Inter-continental Hotel.

NBE uses the latest, state-of-the-art information technology at its branches nationwide to render the following services: tele-banking, network transactions and automatic teller machines.



Money & Business

German-Arab chamber workshops

ATEF UBAID, minister of the public business sector, will attend the concluding session of the workshop held by the German-Arab Chamber of Commerce. The two-day workshop on environmental management will take place at the Semiramis Inter-continental Hotel. Mohamed Farid Khamis, president of the Egyptian Federation of Industries, will take part in the event. A group of Egyptian and foreign experts are also scheduled to attend the workshop.

An Investment Bank announces the following vacancies

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Banque du Caire: 44 years serving the Egyptian economy

Saudi in Saudi Arabia. There is also a branch of the bank in Amman, Jordan. Branches have recently been extended throughout Africa in Uganda and Zimbabwe. And for a number of years, the bank has had a representative office in Kiev, Ukraine.

Banque du Caire is continually striving to develop its services using the latest technology.

Daqahliya Bank assembly to convene

THE GENERAL Assembly of Daqahliya Bank will convene on Saturday 28 December in Mansoura to approve the balance sheet and discuss the modifications in the operation system of the bank. The bank's name will be changed to suit its future activities, Seif Qalari, managing director of the bank stated.

Such a new service is extended, inter alia, by the bank to promote the capital market, via managing the bank's as well as customers' portfolios; extending loans against securities; assuming the role of a market maker; establishing NBE mutual funds and back-office capital market companies to operate in the fields of brokerage, clearing and safe-keeping, financial engineering, restructuring and securitisation. This is in addition to preparing NBE securities index, subscribing on Treasury bills "2000" and extending several other services that target the stimulation of the capital market.

Industrial Development Bank growth record

THE VOLUME of loans provided by the Industrial Development Bank since the beginning of its activities totaled LE4,300 billion. This sum went to 24,000 beneficiaries and 691 projects in all areas.

The cost of the projects financed by the bank provided over 298 thousand job opportunities.

The Industrial Development Bank of Egypt was launched in 1976 to help enhance Egyptian industry. Small-scale and cooperative industries are given special concern by the bank which provides loans at easy terms for these industries.

The bank also buys the equipment required for these ventures. The Industrial Development Bank of Egypt also acts as a mediator between international monetary foundations and national venture to secure the financing these projects require. The bank launched many branches in new urban communities such as 10th of Ramadan City, 6 October City, El-Salam City, El-Sadat City and Borg Al-Arab, so as to boost development there.

The latest service of the bank is the marketing of client's products in local and international fairs through displaying their products in the bank's pavilion at the Cairo International Fair.

Al-Ahram Weekly

Settlement unsettling

Once again, Netanyahu has proven that he is hell-bent on doing as he pleases, with no regard for the consequences of his actions. Incentives have been offered to Jews to encourage them to settle in Palestinian lands. But while the international community, this time including the US, has condemned the settlement expansion policy as counterproductive to peace, the Israeli premier is not interested in listening.

In fact, Netanyahu is not interested in listening to any suggestions that do not sit kosher with his own ideas. Hence the tension between Clinton and Netanyahu. It matters not to the current Israeli administration that the international community, unlike what Israel is trying to do to the Palestinians, is not attempting to dictate policy but put forth recommendations that will push along the long-stalled peace process. Nor does it matter to Netanyahu that the expansion of settlements in both the West Bank and East Jerusalem are initiatives which decidedly run counter to the Oslo Accords, to which, incidentally, the Likud leader does not feel obliged to honour. But while Netanyahu is, to put it in legal terms, assuming facts not yet accepted as evidence — namely that Israel will have increased rights in these areas, be sure that if the Palestinians were to do the same, as in declaring sovereignty, he would be the first to voice vociferous opposition and, perhaps, drop a few bombs for good measure.

These issues, however, are of no interest to Netanyahu and other extremist Israelis, who view the expansion of settlements as a duty compelling enough to perhaps incite a third Intifada and the final and conclusive break down of peace in the region. Moreover, if these issues, as Netanyahu has clearly stipulated, are not really for discussion, then which ones are?

Netanyahu must, once and for all come to terms with the reality that the right to self-determination which Israel values enough to allow it to blindly deconstruct peace, is the same dream that Palestinians look to when forcing themselves to sit at a negotiating table with a partner in peace that would have them dead.

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Opportunities within reach

The economic future looks brighter than ever, but only if the Arab world capitalises on the hard won gains it has already made, writes Ibrahim Nafie



As I noted in last week's article, the Arab world is in a position to realise a period of unprecedented economic growth, following a decade, the 1980s, in which development goals seemed increasingly out of reach.

Or what do I base such optimism?

Certainly, as far as oil exporting nations in the region are concerned, attempts to diversify economies have been strikingly successful. True, oil revenues remain the single most important source of income for these countries, though in the next few years, we can expect to see an enhanced performance in secondary sectors of the industry.

Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Kuwait account for 45 per cent of the world's known oil resources. Outside the Gulf Cooperation Council, only Iraq, Iran, Venezuela, Mexico, the Central Asian republics and Russia possess significant oil reserves. As the century draws to a close, it seems inevitable that industrialised nations will become increasingly dependent on imported oil, the bulk of which will be produced by Arab members of OPEC.

Most experts in the industry predict that OPEC members will, by the end of the century, account for some 45 per cent of total oil production, a rise of almost 10 per cent on current figures. This means that Arab members of OPEC can expect their production of oil to increase from the present level of 16 million barrels per day to 23-25 million barrels daily over the next few years. Should the ban on Iraqi oil exports not have been entirely lifted by the end of the century, then the shortfall in production will be made up by other Gulf oil exporters, thus increasing the overall levels of their potential revenues.

If experts are fairly unanimous in their estimates of the effects of the growth in demand for oil on production, they are less sure about its effects on price. Yet even the most con-

servative estimates calculate the price of a barrel of oil at between \$21-23 over the next few years.

This steady increase in price and in exports will generate increased revenues for oil producers.

The benefits of these increases are already being felt, and in the short term will be increasingly significant to regional economies.

The rise in oil prices during the Gulf crisis

saved the cost of a barrel of oil reach \$17,

since then have seen oil head towards the \$20

a barrel mark, generating increased incomes for GCC members this year.

This jump in oil revenues has coincided with concerted efforts on the part of Arab oil producers to limit their budget deficits. By the end of this financial year debts incurred during the Gulf crisis should have been finally eradicated, and by the end of the decade the Gulf economies should once again be generating large financial surpluses. Though these are un-

likely to reach the levels they did in the seventies and early eighties, they will, nonetheless, furnish an important impetus to inter-Arab cooperation.

If the outlook for oil producers is bright, it is no less so for non oil-producing countries in the region, who will also benefit, indirectly, from the increased demand for oil.

Massive strides have already been made in reforming the majority of Arab economies. Tunisia, Morocco, Jordan and Egypt are already beginning to see the rewards of years of difficult reforms in enhanced economic growth and reduced budget deficits. And the example furnished by these four have, since the mid-nineties, influenced policy makers in Yemen, Syria and Algeria, who are seeking to follow their lead.

Arab economies have made many strides in invigorating their economies. Competition is now at unprecedented levels. The investment climate has never been better with priva-

tion programmes, deregulated financial markets, and legal and tax reforms attracting local and international investments and encouraging higher rates of economic growth. And after a long period of stagnation per capita shares of GNP are finally increasing, a trend that is expected to continue.

How, then, can we capitalise on what are, in effect, a series of very optimistic indicators?

Certainly we need to consolidate our administrative and organisational capacity to service potential investors, which demands that we make use of the latest technologies. And we must be conscious of the need to attract a larger share of increasing oil surpluses as investment within the region.

Much work is still to be done in identifying the most profitable areas for investment, and in calculating which projects have the greatest potential developmental spin-offs in stimulating Arab cooperation.

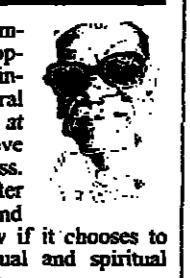
We must not, however, repeat mistakes of the past, when governments bureaucracies acted to inhibit potential investment. Rather, we should be working towards something resembling an Arab free trade zone.

Without venturing to propose a specific mechanism to boost what is, in reality, a paltry level of inter-Arab trade, we must formulate policies capable of capitalising on gains already made if we are to create an Arab free trade zone worthy of the name.

We have a long way to go before we are in a position to realise the full implications of Arab economic cooperation that will enable each Arab country to optimise its full potential. But if we are to reach this position we must remain steadfast in the face of challenges and international changes. Only such steadfastness will enable us to grab the golden opportunity, so tantalisingly in reach, with both hands.

Individual growth

By Naguib Mahfouz



Any attempts at comprehensive development that fail to incorporate a cultural dimension can, at very best, achieve only a partial success. Development is, after all, about growth, and no society can grow if it chooses to ignore the intellectual and spiritual welfare of its people.

Individual growth, of course, can be encouraged through many channels. School, together with the family environment, are of paramount importance. Access to books is also important, as are, increasingly, audio visual devices.

Documentary films which teach young about different civilisations and different peoples are an educational tool that should be widely used in schools. The teaching of literature, the arts, indeed all the humanities and sciences, would benefit from intelligent presentations that use both word and image.

Television is an important tool in developing individual consciousness. But it is a two-edged tool, and we must always be on guard against the reductionist tendency of the medium, which all too often oversimplifies issues. This reservation aside, I find it impossible to conceive of any comprehensive development project that does not fully utilise the educational possibilities of television.

Television is a means of communication which transcends barriers, including the barrier of illiteracy itself, and which has little respect for divisions based on group, class or age.

Based on an interview by Mohamed Salamy.

The Press This Week

Brink of war

time for them to wake up to the tragedies besetting them before the future brings new ones? Will they listen? The greater part of the problem is the Arabs themselves!" (Raghib El-Banna, 15 December)

AI-Shaab: "The question is: what would make Netanyahu give up his violent approach? He has tried a hard-line policy with the Arabs and found out that it is the quickest way to achieve his ambitions. This, because the Arabs, despite their number, are divided and far too weak to declare war on Israel, stop normalisation or withdraw their ambassadors. They are even unable to make angry statements for fear that they would be accused by the US of being warmongers! I ask: are the Arabs capable of anything other than condemnation?" (Mahmoud Hemaya, 13 December)

AI-Mussawar: "Israeli premier Benjamin Netanyahu does not want to believe that the Egyptian press can criticise his actions against the peace process without getting prior consent from President Mubarak or Information Minister Sayyid El-Sherif. The strange thing is that he wants from the Egyptian press what he cannot ask of his own press — to turn a blind eye and a deaf ear to his provocative statements and actions which ignore Palestinian rights." (Mahmud Mohamed Ahmed, 13 December)

AI-Akhbar: "For every action there is a reaction. It is only natural that there should be a change in the Palestinians' mood towards greater extremism in the face of the extremism pervading Israeli society. The persistence of the Israeli government in continuing the policy of settlement building is a brazen provocation to Palestinians and Arabs. Matters have grown worse with the recent Israeli decision to build 150 houses for Jews in the heart of Arab East Jerusalem. It would be no surprise if violence erupted and terrorism returned once again!" (Said Soubi, 12 December)

AI-Ahram: "The present strategy of the Israeli government is to liquidate the Palestinian presence by turning Palestinian areas into unconnected islands so that it would be impossible to have a single Palestinian geographic entity which could be the basis for a future state. In implementing this strategy, Israeli Infrastructure Minister Sharon is trying to whip up 'settlement fever' among Israelis presenting the master as the biggest challenge before Israel and well worth sacrificing peace for." (Taha El-Magdoub, 15 December)

AI-Gomhouria: "It seems that the new ministerial line-up in Washington, made up of hard-liners, extremists and sympathisers with the Hebrew state, has given the green light for the colonialist settlement group to do as it pleases. The group of amateurs in power in Israel have not realised that the era of military colonialism is over or that racist settlements are shameful." (Mahfouz El-Ansari, 10 December)

Compiled by Hala Saqr



In my drawing of the face of Kofi Annan, the UN's new secretary-general, is a mixture of Jomo Kenyatta, Patrice Lumumba, Kwame Nkrumah and Leopold Senghor. I do not see Kofi Annan as a rival of Boutros-Ghali; he is, rather, his successor. Had there been a little more space I would have portrayed him carrying a torch, the same African torch carried by his predecessor.

مكتبة من الأصل

Close up

Salama A. Salama

Revived and invigorated

The theatre today has become a venue for political expression and criticism, with the stage offering artists a means to expose many of the political, social and economic problems that affect contemporary life.

In recent years both state and private sector theatre companies have staged plays addressing pressing social issues. The majority of productions have tended towards comedy and satire, as in *Dastur Ya Ayadna* (By Your Leave, Masters) and *Mama Amerika* (Mother America), though there have been more serious plays, including *Al-Ganir* (The Chain), which addressed the issue of terrorism head on.

And at the moment the National Theatre is given over to yet another politically-inspired play, a farce on electoral tampering and corruption in parliamentary life which takes place under a government that endlessly exploits the press, the police and its own security apparatus to perpetuate its own rule over a population that, though perfectly aware of the sham, can do little to alter the situation.

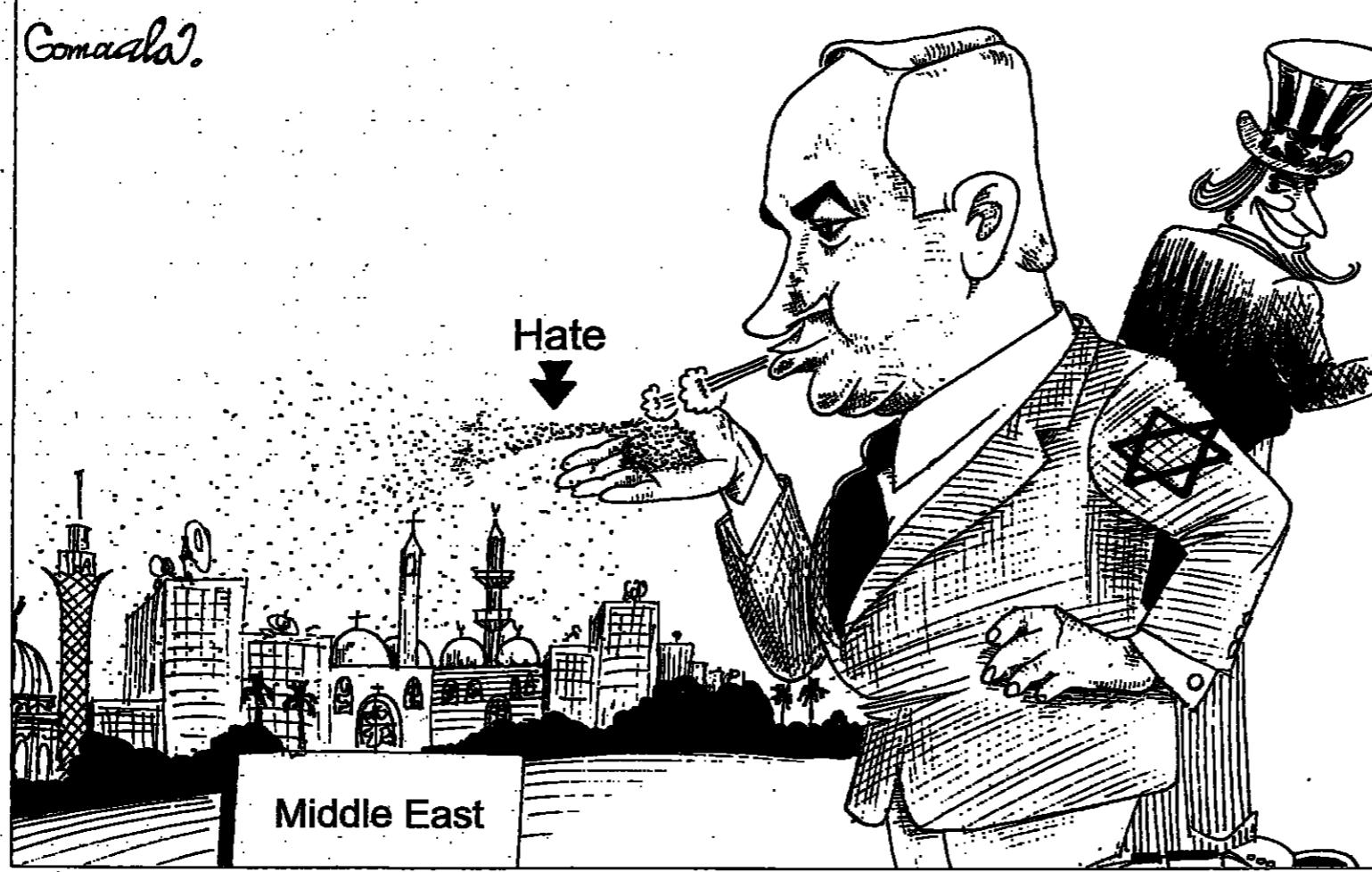
The text, written in the early years of this century by a Romanian playwright, was adapted into Arabic by the well-known novelist Edward El-Kharrat, and was first performed at the National Theatre in the 1956-57 season under the title *Al-Kitab Al-Mafqud* (The Lost Letter), directed by Hamdi Gheith. As part of its ongoing attempts to revivify its repertoire, the National has resuscitated the play, extensively revising the text and incorporating a vast number of contemporary expressions in its new production. The director of the current revival, Mohamed Omar, has invested the play with a new vision, in the articulation of which he is well-served by a cast of distinguished actors.

The play was first produced at the National Theatre at a time when Egypt had no political parties, apart from the Socialist Union, and when parliamentary elections can hardly be said to have existed, may seem, in hindsight, an odd fact. Reviews of the play, published during its run in the late fifties, make it abundantly clear, however, that the production was not intended to defend or promote the integrity of the electoral process, the ultimate sovereignty of the people or the probity of the political process; rather, it was staged as a justification of a single party state propounding a totalitarian ideology that sought to deny any political plurality.

The current revival seeks to redress the earlier attempt at propagandising, and in doing so seeks to restore the intentions of the original playwright. In this the production is mostly successful. The entire ensemble plays excellently — with notable performances from Madi Sadeq in the role of Sergeant Aryan and Ahmed Aql in the role of the corrupt, yet deluded, Pa-

Unfortunately, though, this excellent production has been let down, as is so often the case, by an absolute dearth of publicity. No attempt, it seems, has been made to bring the play to the attention of the general public who will consequently remain, as usual, engrossed in the antics of television actors, both on screen and off.

Comics



Old vinegar, new bottles

Anyone who believes that Clinton's second term heralds an improvement in the Arabs' position is dreaming, writes Edward Said. The challenge now is realising that the US is not essential to resolving regional problems

The appointments announced recently by President Clinton of Madeleine Albright as Secretary of State and former Senator William Cohen as Secretary of Defence should be seen as evidence of how little consideration for foreign affairs there is likely to be during Clinton's second term. Albright herself has no real constituency or power base of her own; she is utterly dependent on Clinton's patronage.

In any case, Clinton was never much interested in foreign policy, even though as a young man he worked for a while as an assistant to Senator William Fulbright of Arkansas, certainly one of the most thoughtful, interesting, and internationally-minded men to populate the US Congress. Although he had initially supported the US war in Vietnam (he voted for the Tonkin Bay Resolution in 1964 under pressure from Lyndon Johnson, a fellow southern Democrat), Fulbright soon turned against the war, and along with Alaska Senator Wayne Morse became LBJ's principal opponent, holding a whole series of Senate hearings on national television that presented damning evidence against US policy, and indeed genocide, in Indochina. Fulbright's Middle East positions were generally favourable to the Arabs, and in 1960 this attitude cost him the post of secretary of state during the Kennedy administration, when a pressure group against him was organised by the pro-Israel lobby; thus did the lamentable Dean Rusk, an extremely limited functionary, attain the highest position in the US cabinet under both Kennedy and Johnson.

Like Fulbright, Clinton was a Rhodes Scholar, a much coveted academic distinction for only 100 young Americans per year (formerly male only, but now including women), whose lives are enhanced by a two-year scholarship to study at Oxford. Cecil Rhodes was a 19th-century British imperialist who founded Rhodesia and was responsible for a massive British presence in South Africa, according to his bequest only young men from the British Empire were to be picked for the scholarships named after him. Unlike Fulbright, however, Clinton never became much of an internationalist or, for that matter, someone with a serious intellectual curiosity about other cultures and peoples.

It is significant also that Senator Fulbright established another set of scholarships named after him (the Fulbright Awards); these continue until the present, and allow young Americans to study all over the world for a year, thus, according to Fulbright, exposing their minds to other cultures. So far as I have been able to tell, Clinton is seriously interested only in England, which is where his Rhodes Scholarship took him, and where he made many of his friends — like Robert Reich and Strobe Talbott — that have dotted his first administration. All of his political life suggests the concerns of a consummate local politician, extremely careful about protecting his domestic support, even to the point of abruptly changing positions (as he did on the welfare bill last summer) in order to do so. Fulbright's career was ended because of his adherence to an old-fashioned southern view of racial segregation, which he supported well into the civil rights era of the middle and late sixties, at exactly the same time that he was campaigning against Vietnam.

During the 1992 campaign, I recall that Jimmy Carter told me that Clinton, with whom he had cordial relations (which have since soured), had no really deep affinity for or interest in the Middle East. I also recall that Carter contrasted Clinton with Reagan, who, it seems, did have a warm spot for the region — partly, I think, because of his great friendship with the Lebanese-American Hollywood actor and comedian Danny Thomas. I speculate about this, however, since I have no hard evidence. Nevertheless, I think that both Reagan and Clinton have a religious tie to Israel and to the Jewish people, like many middle American Protestants for whom the Old Testament consecrates Israel as the realisation of God's word, the two men have an unquestioning attachment to the Jewish state, which has been translated into enormous gifts to money, arms, and political support in the United Nations as well as everywhere else.

That is most unlikely to change in Clinton's second term; it is even more unlikely that Clinton can or will develop any kind of a warm relationship with either the Arab states as a whole or any Arab leader, with the exception perhaps of King Hussein, affection for whom is handed down from one president to another as a sort of

inherited family heirloom. But even this personal affection is incapable of interfering in the great support that Clinton and his Middle East team lavish on Israel, which remains for the president not only an important ally in the region but domestically a crucial way of attracting the financial and political support of Jewish voters. Nothing like this exists on the Arab side.

During Clinton's first term his foreign policy performance was at best indifferent — he never seemed to focus on it unless a crisis suddenly developed — and at worst inconsistent. It took him three years to decide to do anything about the Bosnian tragedy, and when he did something he simply let Richard Holbrooke come up with a plan to partition the country in a way that consolidated Serb and Croat conquests, without compensating the Bosnian victims for their tremendous losses. Middle East policy was run by a group of so-called Middle East insiders led by Dennis Ross, a Bush hold-over, all of whom had excellent (some would say continuing) connections with the Israeli lobby. Ross and the Israelis devised the Oslo Accords, managed them, and continue to use them as a way of subjugating the Palestinians.

It is interesting, moreover, that the details of Middle East policy have in fact been withheld, with the so-called independent media's cooperation, from public scrutiny. There has been no discussion in the media of what the territories now actually look like, with their discontinuous little Bantustans preventing movement for Palestinians, with their by-passing roads and their constantly metastasising settlements, and there has been no attention at all to the absence of any reference in the 800 pages of the Oslo Accords to the end of the Israeli occupation, which is not even mentioned as a fact on the ground for 29 years.

I recall that after Oslo II was signed last year I appeared on a television news and discussion programme in which I made some of these points, which were then raised by the moderator with Dennis Ross, also on the programme, who answered laconically that one would have to read the text of Oslo II to judge if I was correct. Typically, the moderator dropped the matter right then and there. What the media has wanted since that time was Arabs who spoke of the Oslo peace process as a desirable, unchangeable thing, not as a deeply flawed, damaging situation for Palestinians whose lives have become qualitatively worse since the process began in 1993.

Clinton has had literally nothing to say about all this, except that he brought peace to the Middle East, a vague general affirmation that he demonstrated when he summoned Netanyahu, Arafat and King Hussein to Washington for their uneventful (to put it mildly) summit. Warren Christopher, a docile, bureaucratic and radically boring man concentrated on his unproductive meetings with Hafez El-Assad, who simply wore down the hapless, sad-faced secretary of state; in addition, Christopher's Assad experiences earned him the opprobrium and abuse of the Jewish right-wing press and conservative members of Congress.

As to whether real peace is at hand, or whether there is less hostility between Arabs and Israelis today, three years after the Oslo Accords, Clinton doesn't bother to answer. He has let Ross and his little band of stalwarts carry on without so much as an occasional look into the room. The reason, of course, is that Clinton has no interest in foreign affairs, except as they affect US trade; hence his recent pre-occupation with Australia and Asia, and his continued headache with China. The Middle East is therefore a stabilised, pacified place, especially with Hafez El-Assad, who simply wore down the hapless, sad-faced secretary of state; in addition, Christopher's Assad experiences earned him the opprobrium and abuse of the Jewish right-wing press and conservative members of Congress.

Clinton's choice of Madeleine Albright — now being scrutinised closely by Arab politicians and experts for shadow clues as to her sympathy for the Arab position — does absolutely nothing to change the existing pattern. Albright has admitted to being an unremarkable intellect, and she is certainly very far from being a creative thinker possessing strategic vision on matters of policy, although I hasten to add that in my opinion it is impossible to imagine how the American political machine can ever produce a creative thinker. Henry Kissinger I know has the reputation of being some kind of grand heavyweight philosopher, but the merest look at his

record and writings reveals a shrewd, calculating mind only at home in situations where the preponderance of American power makes thought relatively unnecessary. It is difficult to see where in the Middle East, Central and South America, Europe or Asia Kissinger produced much more than a great deal of human suffering and immediate advantages for the wealthy and corrupt.

Like Kissinger and Brezhnev, Albright is a product of the foreign policy establishment that was reared on the Cold War and a vast military apparatus whose job it was to frighten Americans into accepting economic sacrifice for delusions of grandeur and of the largely fictitious Russian threat.

Although she was born in Europe, Albright has fashioned herself into a hard-talking, tough, abrasive representative of the post-Cold War United States. I recall earlier this year when she was directly confronted on television with images of Iraqi children dying by the thousands of malnutrition and disease — all of it due to the American policy on sanctions — her rejoinder was that Saddam Hussein was a vicious traitor who deserved what he was getting. At the same time she protested that she was not at all inhuman.

It was also her idea (as a way of gaining favour with the right-wing Republican congressmen who control the House and Senate Foreign Relations Committees) to convince Clinton to fire Boutros Ghali who, for reasons entirely unrelated to his solid performance on the job, was portrayed during the presidential campaign as an advocate of something ludicrously called 'world government', and hence as a threat to US sovereignty and security. (Most non-Americans find this kind of bizarre logic difficult to fathom, but, alas, it is all too real.) Beyond that there is very little about Albright to suggest the new directions she will chart for US policy. Because of her background as a refugee from (as she often puts it) Hitler and Stalin, and because of her interest in her native Czechoslovakia, which was the subject of her doctoral dissertation at Columbia, her interests are likely to remain principally European. She appears to be a committed Zionist and the best of my knowledge has never said anything about the Arabs that indicated either knowledge or interest.

Albright, I think, is altogether more interesting as a symptom of the present impasse in US foreign policy than she is as a thinker or policy-maker in her own right. Three main currents have emerged since George Bush (or one of his speech-writers) coined the empty phrase, "the new world order". One is represented by a series of eager new theorists who dangle a clever-sounding, but ultimately superficial, concept before Washington's entranced eyes, go on to write an essay in a magazine like *Foreign Affairs*, and then pry a lot of money out of a publisher for a book on the same subject; in this category belong Francis Fukuyama, whose concept died barely a year after it was born, Samuel (the clash of civilisations) Huntington, who has miraculously managed to keep his phrase alive for longer than anyone else, and Bernard (Jihad versus McWorld) Barber, who is struggling to be better known. All of these aspirants to influence, as well as their disciples, have never said anything about the Arabs that indicated either knowledge or interest.

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Second are the free-market apostles whose ideas ultimately derive from Milton Friedman and Frederick von Hayek, but whose positions are, in my opinion, much more perniciously put into practice by the World Bank and every Central Bank trying to protect its economy and currency while further impoverishing its working and peasant classes. Clinton belongs in this school, for which he has had the late Ron Brown and Micky Kantor as his tireless executive assistants.

Third is the school of believers in a foreign policy run on human rights and democracy principles but there, except for Third World non-governmental organisations trying to get funding from the National Endowment for Democracy (a very untrustworthy, even comic arm of US foreign policy), not many people either inside or outside the US are convinced. There are simply too many contradictions, absurd inconsistencies and glaring abuses in US policy for anyone to believe that a government that has practised genocidal warfare in Cambodia, invaded innumerable countries all over the world, subverted Central American governments like Guatemala's, and has run its foreign policy unilaterally as if the world

was its private fiefdom, can officially represent democracy and human rights. Albright functions somewhere between the second and third currents or schools.

Short of asserting its disproportionately enormous military and economic power all over the globe there is no US foreign policy, or at least no integrated grand theory to speak of. The Cold War provided universities, military industries, the armed forces, the think tanks and indeed the official ideology with an unending supply of occasions to project US power, to legitimise and, in the best nineteenth century imperialist mode, to dignify it with a sense of portentous mission. With the Cold War over, nothing has taken the place of the earlier policy of subversion, containment and suicidal confrontation (as in the Cuban missile crisis of 1962 or the deranged Star Wars programme initiated by Ronald Reagan). There were plenty of wars to be fought, either directly or through surrogates.

Now the situation is much more complicated, and the US finds itself without a clear purpose or definition of what it is all about except for its 'leadership' role. Clinton's appointment of Albright and Cohen represents that impasse, as well as the vacancy beyond. With a domestic constituency that has become uninterested in the world beyond, the President also faces a potentially very hostile Congress, and the likelihood of an accelerating series of powerful legal assaults against himself and his wife; Whitewater will not quickly go away and neither will the charges of perjury, financial malfeasance, moral profligacy and the like.

The conclusion to be drawn here is that there is not going to be much in the way of bold moves in the Middle East peace process, or of a tilt toward the Arab camp. A weaker president and secretary of state will resort to the old discourse and of course continue to protect Israel, even though Netanyahu himself will never be very well-liked, despite the fact that the media, in alliance with a substantial majority of the American Jewish community, has already accommodated to his extremism if not to his every provocation.

The challenge for Arab and Palestinian policy makers is slowly to disengage from the notion that America must be involved in every aspect of the Middle East, and to try at last to build a decently functional common position on the essential requirements for peace and co-existence: full Israeli withdrawal from Arab territory, Palestinian self-determination and compensation for losses (this would have to include a central focus on Jerusalem and refugees), and, finally, an Israeli commitment to end its belligerent policies. With the exception of Syria, none of the Arab states have coordinated their policies around such a position, which is one reason why the region seems to be in such disarray. I also think that there have to be public reminders that in the likelihood of a war with Israel, the Jewish state is going to have to face serious losses; simply for Israel to add more conquered territory to its already bloated size will neither work nor produce the desired results.

In short what we need is a stiffening of resolve based on the moral high ground which I believe the Palestinians must above all re-capture after the devastation wreaked on us by the Oslo Accords. I have little doubt that three years after its inception the US-sponsored peace process has ground to a halt, and has been revealed for the hollow sham that it always was. Looking back on it one wonders in what deranged state of mind, and in what unreal laboratory such a scheme was dreamed up as a way of depriving the Arabs generally, the Palestinians in particular, not only of their land but of their future and past. Anyone who now believes that people like Madeleine Albright and her boss can come up with solutions for the Arabs is a dreamer.

The point, I suppose, is that we must now launch a new peace initiative based not on the secret manoeuvres of a few leaders, but on a broad-based real movement for peace in Palestine and elsewhere. For this, intellectuals, leaders, and indeed the institutions of civil society have to coordinate their policies and, above all, their view of the final goal which was so mischievously kept out of the Oslo agreement. Arab leaders therefore have a unique opportunity to open their societies to what their people really need and desire. To lose it again is to drift either into a losing war or an equally losing peace yet again.

Soapbox

Lifeline for Jerusalem

Last week the secretary-general of the Arab League established the Jerusalem Centre in implementation of a resolution adopted by the League during its September session. The Centre will undertake the documentation, maintenance and restoration of ancient sites and monuments in Jerusalem within the framework of the League's concern for the holy city. It will also act to promote liaison between other governments and non-governmental organisations with a similar focus, but which may somehow feel inhibited about entering into direct cooperation with Palestine, Islamic or Arab governmental organisations.

Certainly it is to be hoped that the founding of the Jerusalem Centre will in time encourage Arab states and regional organisations to establish similar entities for Jerusalem with mandates similar to that of the Jerusalem Centre. Such organisations would then be able to share the burden of conserving and protecting the heritage of the city.

It would, perhaps, be useful to embed those articles in the nature of the mandate, drawing from across the political spectrum. Jerusalem, and the preservation of its heritage, has become, in short, a rallying call for all the disparate groups opposed to Zionism and racism.

Establishing non-governmental groups associated with the name of Jerusalem has a number of obvious benefits, not least the fact that they will continue to remind the world of the existence of this holy city as an Arab city, and as a capital of the independent Palestinian state.

This week's Soapbox speaker is a columnist specialised in Palestinian affairs with the opposition newspaper Al-Shaab.

Mahgoub Omar



To The Editor

Suez allegations

Sir — Mr Paolo Lombardini raised questions in his letter to you on 9 November about the allegations made by Mr Mohamed Mahgoub Othman against British forces in 1956.

Classified military files from the period are now declassified and available for researchers to study at the Public Records Office in London. The records show no evidence to support Mr Othman's story of being deliberately blinded by British forces following capture. Indeed, the International Committee of the Red Cross delegate in Port Said wrote to his head-

quarters that he was "satisfied in all respects" as regards the treatment of Egyptian prisoners.

As for Mr Lombardini's original three questions, there is no evidence that the British forces were in need of cornflakes.

In fact 12 Egyptians with multiple injuries were flown to Britain following the conflict and given corneal grafts as part of their treatment. The records show no evidence of prisoners being flown to Cyprus. To the best of my knowledge, Mr Mohamed Mahgoub Othman has not tried to sue the British government.

Wishing you continuing success in pro-

ducing an excellent newspaper.

Ed Webb

press & public affairs

officer,

British Embassy,

Cairo

US versus Ghali

Sir — From the American point of view, UN Secretary-General Boutros Ghali is an old-fashioned diplomat, ill-suited for building bridges to the 21st century. He was a sluggish reformer, weak on management. When he was at the helm of the UN its budget ran over more than 20 per cent since 1991. But all

these allegations are fragile and refutable.

However, I wish the US had announced the genuine reasons behind its stance vis-à-vis Ghali. If not for the hushed up UN report on the grisly massacre at Qana, the US would have considered Ghali worthy of a second term. Instead, the US wants to marginalise the role of the UN and become the sole sturdy policeman on this planet.

But the world community is fed up with this US hegemony. This policy will expose the US to the indignation and retaliatory consequences of the world at large.

Mahmoud El-Eswey,

Down in the street

David Blake
prefers more than a
twist of lemon

Cairo Symphony Orchestra; Gamal Abdel-Rahim. Variations on a Folkloric Theme; Rachmaninov Concerto No 2 in C minor for Piano & Orchestra, op 18, soloist Andrei Diev; Brahms Symphony No 2 in D major op 73; conductor Ahmed El-Saeid, Cairo Opera House, Main Hall, 7 December

Paris: Ramzi Yassa, the pianist scheduled for this concert, injured a finger and is forced to cancel.

Cairo: Little did we expect the big surprise that greeted us on entering the Opera House. Andrei Diev from Moscow would play instead. And so, with the Abdel-Rahim folkloric variations for large orchestra, one of the most exciting concerts of the year opened.

Not a full house, but an audience large enough to make the right noises as they began to show their pleasure at a unique surprise event.

Abdel-Rahim's *Variations* are popular. The music is dense, sharply metaphoric, has wit and can also let loose striking power. A good time commences this short journey through improvisational jobs of sound. And each job is meaningful, with a sting in the tail. It builds to a darkly prophetic climax — not noisy, not repetitive and, unlike so much other contemporary music, not empty. It is loaded with warnings, and then, rather aloof, withdraws and moves off. We are left having visited the oracle, message delivered, as mysterious as ever.

Next came Rachmaninov No 2. Since childhood pianists have swept by us playing it like dragons amid washes of gorgous blood-chilling noise. Is it music? Was it a piano? Do hands do those sort of things? It is bad, sad, chilling, uplifting. Words topple.

That, of course, was the point of Rachmaninov — he was a master of the topple. Only Wagner was better at it. Tristan moves through this No 2, this love-hate thing of which the insolent Seidl was probably ashamed. How did Diev use his quite incredible power to deliver the music? He did it cleanly, photographically, and without fuss.

The No 2 belongs to everyone and is replete with memories of the composer himself playing to Richter and beyond. You can choose your player. Diev's approach was neither academic nor grande dame. What he did was a sort of in-the-blood thing, erasing all banalities.

He and Saeid put it in its place without shame. No updating. They both swash-buckled their way through it, like Napoleonic generals in a battle charge. Flashes of gold against dark uniforms — then into scented rooms where heavily-fleshed beauties — like the Sargent painting of the Wertheimer sisters — nestle in crimson velvet and diamonds, comfortable in the imperial cocoon before it exploded, blood and flame, right



Rachmaninov

in the appalled face of the world. At the opera, almost a century later, some listeners did not sit back comfortably but perched on the edge of their seats.

Diev gave opulence, something not at all fashionable, which is strange, since there is so much opulence about. But it costs. Christmas is almost here and the No 2 concerto, as played by Diev, is like standing in slushy snow looking into the window of a great jeweller. Lovely Christmas baubles but too little money to buy.

Diev's athletic power, though, permitted him, at least, to deliver a clean-cut, diamond glistening version, leaving

too little time for vain chatter. He peeped into the chasm and together we could appreciate the poisonous allure, rippling like the notes and dynamics he produced. The player blazed in the far from flattery light he turned on the music.

The concert moved to Brahms and his second symphony in D major, opus 73. It's late night, the dead of night, cold and silent. Someone has just slipped a note under the door. Brahms is not dead. He is alive and in the streets. Four movements it says in the programme, three allegros with one adagio jammed in the middle. Brahms is in a hurry. He

to defeat the lot of them and sigh brightly, making the best of it. Another symphony to hang on the line. And so we go round the bend with big Jo at the helic.

El-Saeid and the Cairo Symphony, never noisy, never heavy, never rancid or stale, but butter and lemon, with plenty of the latter.

Does anyone like this man, *Brahms*? Suddenly he is fashionable and soon the biographers will have their teeth into him. But Brahms has gone into the streets. And he's fooling everyone, down there, in the streets, where he began, where all true fashion begins.

Margo Veillon (Photographs)
Spanish Cultural Centre, 20 Boulos Hanna St, Dokki, Tel 360 1766. Daily exc Fri & Sat. 10am-2pm & 5pm-8pm. Until 29 Dec.

Hamza Abdalla (Pastels)
Cairo Opera Gallery, Opera House Grounds, Gezira, Tel 340 5436. Daily 10am-1pm. Until 29 Dec.

Animals in Egyptian Art
Rare Books and Special Collections Library, corner of El-Sheikh el-Zaher and Mansoura Sts, Downtown, Tel 242 9407. Daily 10am-1pm. Until 29 Dec.

International Exhibition of Miniatures
El-Masri St, Zamalek, Tel 340 3791. Daily exc Fri & Sat. 10am-2pm & 5pm-8pm. Until 29 Dec.

Japanese Cultural Centre, 106 Qasr El-Aini St, Garden City, Tel 355 5962.

Commercial cinemas change their programmes every Monday. The information provided is valid through Sunday after which it is wise to check with the cinemas. Arabic films are sold with subtitles. For information, contact the venue.

El-Jentil (The Gentlemen)
Tiba II, Nasr City, Tel 242 9407. Daily 10am-1pm. Until 29 Dec.

The Life and Writings of Gertrude Bell
British Council Gallery, 192 El-Nil St, Agouza, Tel 301 0319. Daily 10am-1pm. Until 29 Dec.

Time Modest (Photographs)
Spanish Cultural Centre, 20 Boulos Hanna St, Dokki, Tel 360 1766. Daily exc Fri & Sat. 10am-2pm & 5pm-8pm. Until 31 Dec.

Photographs of Mexico in the 1920s.

International Exhibition of Miniatures
Zainab Khatoon House, behind El-Azhar Mosque, Daily 10am-1pm. Until 31 Dec.

El-Saqqah (The Clown)
El-Saqqah Theatre, Qasr El-Aini, Tel 355 2484. Daily exc Mon, 5pm & 9pm.

Ka'b 'Al (High Heels)
El-Saqqah Theatre, Talaat Harb St, Downtown, Tel 378 4910. Daily 8pm, Wed & Thur 10pm.

El-Zahra (The Leader)
El-Horrea Theatre, Pyramids Road, Gezira, Tel 385 3932. Daily 8pm, Wed & Thur 10pm.

El-Farouk (The Madness Of Girls)
Mahmoud Farid Theatre, El-Saqqah, Tel 770 603. Daily 8pm.

The Crown

El-Horrea Pyramids Road, Gezira, Tel 385 3838. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 5pm & 9pm.

Legends of the Fall

El-Horrea Pyramids Road, Gezira, Tel 385 3838. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 5pm & 9pm.

Kasr

Kasr I, 15 Emanuele St, Downtown, Tel 324 830. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 5pm & 9pm. Tiba I, Nasr City, Tel 262 5467. Daily 10am-3pm. 3.30pm, 5.30pm & 9.30pm.

Carine

Metro, 35 Talaat Harb St, Downtown, Tel 383 3897. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 5pm & 9pm.

Coptic Museum

Mar Girgis, Old Cairo, Tel 362 8766. Daily exc Fri, 9am-4pm; Fri 9am-11.30am & 1pm-3pm.

Islamic Museum

Port Said St, Ahmed Maher St, Bab El-Khalq, Tel 390 9930/390 1520. Daily exc Fri, 9am-4pm; Fri 9am-11.30am & 2pm-4pm.

Primal Fear

Ramzi El-Banu II, Coriolis El-Nil St, Tel 574 7436. Daily 10.30am, 1.30pm, 3pm, 5pm & 9pm.

Listings

EXHIBITIONS

Gazbia Sirky
Egyptian Centre for International Cultural Cooperation, 11 Shagay El-Dar St, Zamalek, Tel 341 5419. Until 19 Dec.

Watercolours by one of Egypt's leading contemporary artists

Marga Veillon
Egyptian Gallery, Main Campus, AUC, El-Sheikh Rihan St, Tel 357 5436. Daily exc Fri & Sat. 1pm-2pm & 5pm-8pm. Until 19 Dec.

The Portrait Photography of Van Lee
Sawy Gallery, Main Campus, AUC, El-Sheikh Rihan St, Tel 357 5436. Daily exc Fri & Sat. 1pm-2pm & 5pm-8pm. Until 19 Dec.

Waseeh Wahba
Markaryan Gallery, 8 Champion St, off Tahrir Sq, Tel 378 4494. Daily 1pm-2pm. Until 19 Dec.

Recent works exhibited under the collective title 'Rumah'

The Portrait Photography of Van Lee
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THE PAINTINGS of Tahia Halim, currently on show at Khan El-Maghrib, capture the spirit of Nubia. The directness of the brushstrokes serve to articulate the artist's love of both a place and its people.

The work of El-Ghouri artists is showing in the foyer of the Al-Ahram Building. Worth noting among the many sculptures, drawings, batiks and ceramics on show are several Upper Egyptian landscapes by Serag Abd-El-Rahman.

Mashrabiya Gallery shows recent works by Wagieh Wahba. Dynamic form, elements drawn from folklore and dramatic compositional tensions characterise the show.

L'Atelier du Caire shows ceramic works by Safiya Helmi alongside still-life paintings by Hoda Khaled.

Reviewed by Nagwa El-Kashef

Compiled by Ingy El-Kashef

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Diary of



As the curtains go down on the 20th Cairo International Film Festival, Al-Ahram Weekly spotlights the awards and the honorees

20th Cairo International Film Festival: Awards

Best Film: *Al-Tuffaha* (The Apple); dir. Rashed El-Masharawi, Egypt
Award for Best Director: Pantelis Voulgaris, *Acropolis*; Greece
Award for Best Actor: Abu Bakr Ezzat, for his role in *Al-Mara'a Wal-Satour* (The Woman and the Cleaver); Egypt
Award for Best Actress: Julia Jaguer, *Outside Time*
Award for Best Screenplay: Franck Beyer, *St. Nicholas Church*, France

Germany
Silver Pyramid Award: *Markhaban Ya Ibn El-Am* (Sister Cousin), dir. Mirzak El-Ulvi; Algeria
Special Jury Award: Andreas Kleinert, director of *Outside Time*; Germany
Best Arabic Film Award: *Haifa*, dir. Rashid Mashharawi; Palestine
Naguib Mahfouz Award for Best Directorial Debut: Sandrine Veysse, dir. *Will it Snow this Christmas?*; France



Leila Eloui in *Al-Tuffaha* (The Apple), winner of the Golden Pyramid Award

Acting on conviction

Amal El-Sherif speaks to Russian director Nikita Mikhalkov — past-winner of the Palme d'Or at Cannes and honouree of the 20th CIFF — about hamburgers, meat balls and other cinematic dishes

Here as one of the honorees of the 20th Cairo International Film Festival (CIFF), Russian director Nikita Mikhalkov is no stranger to the international festival circuit. Long a favourite director in Russia, Mikhalkov's winning of the Palme d'Or in Cannes a few years ago simply confirmed his international reputation as a director.

Initially, Mikhalkov studied theatre before launching into a career as a film director and actor. Mikhalkov himself does not see this as a major transition or turning point in his career.

"My film studies followed the conventional pattern of training in Russia," he says, "where aspiring film directors receive a grounding in both theatre and cinema studies. And yes, I suppose theatre did influence my directorial style in that a well-wrought scenario is very important to me, as is the movement of camera."

Mikhalkov — a noted actor as well as director — does not see any contradiction between the two roles.

"I see cinema as a multi-faceted art, so it was only natural that I should act, write scenarios and finally direct my own films," he explains. There are some stories, he says, that you feel tempted to present according to your own vision. He also felt the need "to address social problems of relevance to the man next door — problems tackled in *A Quiet Day at the End of the War* (1973) and *Prisoner of Love* (1976)."

He cites, among the reasons why he decided to move behind the camera rather than before it, the temptation to adapt Russian literary works, particularly Chekhov, for the screen. Nevertheless, his experience as an actor, he

adds, have given him, as a director, a greater understanding of how to give guidance and communicate instructions to those who perform in his films.

Asked how he explained the fact that the collapse of the Soviet Union did not affect his work, Mikhalkov grows restless. In his opinion, he says, social systems should not affect artists and their stance on life. "If my attitudes had changed [after the collapse of the Soviet Union], this would have meant that I had been deceitful, or that I had become deceitful. In reality I have always discussed, and with great liberty, pressing and controversial issues in my films, regardless of the regime. It is only as a Russian citizen that the recent changes have affected me, but my vision as an artist has not changed." He does concede, however, that Russian cinema is currently passing through a crisis, caused primarily by lack of funds and problems of distribution.

Still, he will not countenance the charge, commonly levelled against the Russian films, that their screenplays are less appealing than their American counterparts.

"The Russian scenario," he says, "is like Russian minced meat balls: it's a cinematic concoction that reflects the Russian national character, in the same way that Egyptian films reflect the national dish of *foul*." And American cinema? "That does not really reflect any specific national flavour, but is closer in nature to hamburgers: a flavoursome meal of sex, thrills and violence," he says.

Carried away by his culinary imagery, Mikhalkov

takes the analogy a step further.

"American cinema is invading the world in the same way that McDonalds has invaded the capitals of the world." But the beginning of the end of Russian cinema, as he puts it, would be to try and imitate American films, as do some young Russian directors. To Mikhalkov, the human element in films is all important. He views his own work as an anatomy of the Russian soul — the glory of which it is capable, as well as its paradoxes and contradictions.

How does Mikhalkov explain the trend towards emigration among Russian scientists and artists? The question appears to be a *faux pas*. "It's as if you're asking me why I still live in Russia! I'm sure there are problems in

Egypt, so why don't you leave the country?" he exclaims. Then, more seriously: "Yes, the phenomenon exists, yes Russian scientists and artists are emigrating, because of all the difficult circumstances in Russia. Myself, I am an artist and every artist nurtures the dream of improving conditions in his homeland." Others who have made the choice of leaving Russia, he says, should ask themselves until when they will remain on the run.

Given the wide acclaim Mikhalkov's films have received in the form of awards at both Russian and international festivals, the latest being the CIFF, how has that affected his work?

"I don't work with awards on my mind. If ever I were to ask myself why I work, I wouldn't find an answer. Could you ask the birds why they sing on the trees?"

But he says he is happy to have attended the CIFF, "which I know to be the biggest film festival in the region, and thus being honoured is it is flattering." The CIFF, he adds, has also given him the chance to watch Egyptian films which he finds have a likeness with Russian cinema — not least in their melodrama.

Plain Talk

One of the main attractions of the 20th Cairo International Film Festival (CIFF) was the screening of a documentary entitled *Umm Kulthum, the Voice of Egypt*. I felt really elated watching that magnificent recording of the life and art of that great Egyptian singer. Because the film was not a feature production, it was shown outside competition, nor was it included in the programme of press screenings.

My guess, however, is that the documentary was seen by as many viewers as those who watched the widely publicised feature films in competition. The documentary's popularity was such that Saadeddin Wahba, the president of the festival, promised to have it shown again later, and many members of the audience were heard muttering that television should really screen the film during Ramadan.

Let me make a confession: to the majority of the audience, myself among them, it was the nostalgia as much as the voice, that moved us quite literally to tears. But it was also salutary to watch the young initiated, beyond the magnificence of Umm Kulthum's voice, into the national events to which she bore witness, let alone participated in.

More than just a biography of the diva, it is a saga of the modern history of Egypt, more or less from the time of the ascendancy to the throne of King Farouk until the death of the singer in 1975. No wonder the director and producer of the film gave it the subtitle *The Voice of Egypt*. Indeed, Umm Kulthum's songs were always there at every national transition, lyrically commenting on events. To old-timers like myself, her role in boosting the country's morale after the 1967 defeat, when the Arab front disintegrated, is unforgettable. Umm Kulthum had the courage, conviction and confidence to travel to a number of Arab countries, including Tunisia, which, during that time, severed diplomatic relations with Egypt. Such visits were not merely for fund-raising, but were meant to assert Egypt's position as the leading Arab country. Old footage included in the documentary shows Umm Kulthum being met by the president and his wife. Her reception by the Tunisians was such that they had to be cordoned off by the police for her protection.

With its rich mix of documentary, live footage and interviews, the film must have taken the director/producer tremendous time and effort to research and put together so coherently. And we get to hear some interesting anecdotes. After 1952, some members of the Revolutionary Command Council gave instructions that any broadcasts of Umm Kulthum songs be stopped, since she had previously performed for King Farouk. But when Gamal Abdel-Nasser heard of this decision he annulled the order saying that "Umm Kulthum is the voice of Egypt, which cannot be silenced". To further confirm his admiration of her, he attended her recitals, which always took place on the first Thursday of the month.

The film traces the development of Umm Kulthum and the way she adapted her songs to events. Apart from classical composers like El-Sombati, she invited then-younger composers like Baligh Hamdi, Kamal El-Tawil and Mohamed El-Mougi to compose for her. She must have realised that she could no longer bank on her older, more conservative, audience. Here, once again, she showed the same astuteness with which she approached all her decisions.

Watching the concerts she gave, you relived the atmosphere of awe, or rather sanctity, that reigned on the auditorium: the breathless silence that fell on the hall while she sang and then the clamour and ovation which followed every pause. There was a beautiful response from the audience and a loving feeling emerged between them and her. While one cannot help comparing that intimate artistic relationship to the rough-and-tumble atmosphere at concerts today, it was with pleasure that I noted that the audience at the screening reacted to her songs with something of the enthralled dignity of past days.

But let me put my cards on the table: having played a role, albeit a small one, in the realisation of *Umm Kulthum, the Voice of Egypt*, I have reason to take pride in the finished product. When Michelle Goldman came to Egypt, I was one of the first people she met and I did all I could to put her in touch with people who could help her with her project. One thing I could not manage was to find an Egyptian to finance the film — a great pity that I think it is shameful that the Egyptian participation in this film was restricted to interviews and providing old footage. On the other hand, it is heartbreaking to find an American so fascinated by our great singer that she managed, through perseverance, to produce such a magnificent film.

Mursi Saad El-Din

Change of direction

Hani Mustafa interviews Rashid Mashharawi and Mohamed Bakri, director and lead actor of *Haifa*, selected as best Arabic film at this year's festival

The work of Palestinian director Rashid Mashharawi must now be familiar to Cairo film-festival-goers. At last year's CIFF, *Hatta Iska'irin Akbar* (Curfew) won the Golden Pyramid Award, and at this, the 20th festival, *Haifa* has garnered the Best Arabic Film Award. Established to mark UNESCO's choice of Cairo as this year's cultural capital of the region, the award will nevertheless remain as one of the fixed competition categories in coming CIFFs.

Much of the political content of Mashharawi's films draws on the director's own experience: he was born in Mukhayyam Al-Shati', Gaza, in 1962. Mohamed Bakri who plays the lead, Haifa, was born near Acre in 1953, and carries an Israeli passport. Although Bakri's previous experience as an actor includes a role in Costa Gavras' *Hanna*, he considers himself primarily a theatre actor. Having studied at Tel Aviv University, Bakri directed three mono-dramas based on novels by Emile Habibi, Hanna Mina and El-Tayyeb Salib.

While Mashharawi has mostly shied away from crude political allegorisation in *Haifa*, the beginning and the end of the film deliberately foreground its political content. The film begins with a car which is almost a wreck. The damaged hero Haifa (Bakri) is in the driver's seat, singing. In the last sequence of the film Haifa finds himself standing at a crossroads, having to choose between the road down which his aunt's funeral procession is going and that along which celebrations are being held for Palestinian Authority, which has just entered Gaza.

Between the beginning and the end of the film, political signifiers are more subtle, tempered with a

Above: Director Rashid Mashharawi; left: Mohamed Bakri in one of the scenes of *Haifa*.

hint of black humour. There is, for example, the motto reiterated by the hero (or perhaps one should say anti-hero): "Jaffa, Haifa, Akka [Acre]". To Mashharawi, Haifa (the character) represents the past and the face of memory. Yet it is not an elegiac memory portrayed by Bakri in the part of Haifa.

"What drew me to the character," he says, "was this passion and joy in the face of reality. Haifa has this abiding love for Haifa [the city], Acre, Jaffa and the people of the refugee camps. It is this love and joy that rupture the sad climate and false peace," says Bakri.

But for Bakri to master the portrayal of the deformed Haifa and his ravings was no easy task. In search of a model for the character, he went to an asylum in Bethlehem, which he visited on a daily basis. "Finally I met an inmate called Abu Maged who seemed perfect as a model," says Bakri. "Abu Maged, who is illiterate, had fallen in love with a beautiful, educated girl in his neighbourhood. When she accepted his marriage proposal he lost his mind. One of his ticks was to ask every now and then: 'What do you do for a living?' I copied his tone for Haifa's call: Jaffa, Haifa, Akka [Acre]," explains Bakri.

Apart from Haifa, the film depicts the lives of a family living in refugee camps, a setting that allows for an historical contextualisation of the Palestinian situation, seen through the various generations of the family. But given the accent Mashharawi wants to place on political dissonance and discord, the screenplay moves in a non-sequential manner and there are often



false notes and disturbing repetitions in the music. Given the film's strong note of discontent about the political status quo in Palestine, were there any objections

from the censors?

Injustice is not everlasting. The present situation will not last forever. Maybe we won't be there to see this brighter future, but our children will."

Diary of a film-goer In which Hossam Elwan does not receive an invitation to the closing ceremony and frayed tempers result in fistfights

Wednesday, 11 December

At 1pm I go to watch the Algerian film *Machkela*, directed by Siqasseb Hagag. The film's plot would be familiar to any Arab audience: a father sets out to avenge himself on the young man who has seduced his daughter. In his quest, the father leads his family into dire straits, while meantime, in any case, the young man has returned to marry the daughter. But father insists on his revenge, the young man is killed, and, hey presto, the family is destitute.

In terms of structure, scenario and editing, the film is simplistic, but the landscapes and the mountains in which the action occurs are magnificent. The film in Berlin, is subtitled in English. But the audience at the Small Hall — supposedly the intellectual elite — remains rowdy and insistent on giving a sarcastic running commentary. This suddenly comes to seem doubly ironic when I learn that the film won the Audience Award at the Montpellier Film Festival.

Between 4 and 5pm I attempt to gain access to a screening of the Egyptian film *Al-Tuffaha* (The Apple). Security, unfortunately, bars journalists from entering the auditorium and tempers become frayed. I abandon the attempt at the onset of fistfights, only to witness members of the jury being smuggled in through the back door of the Small Hall.

At 5pm the seminar on Arab cinema begins, after a delay of some four hours spent waiting for the panelists, some of

Mohamed Zarr's first full length feature film. Technically unsophisticated, the film nevertheless has a complex structure. An artist who feels claustrophobic within his emotional relationship with a young woman is increasingly drawn to a boy from a popular quarter. The artist's desire to move to the quarter precipitates a series of ruptures within the social structures there — and the boy ends up dead, though whether he has been murdered remains unclear. The artist recedes from the scene, leaving behind him a mural depicting the quarter. Later, when the screening of Egyptian film *Al-Mara'a Wal-Satour* (The Woman and the Cleaver) is about to begin, security attempts a repeat performance of yesterday. This time, however, the journalists win the day. *Al-Mara'a Wal-Satour* is a police film with stereotypical characters that no amount of goodwill can make interesting.

Friday, 13 December

I attend the 10am screening of the Russian film *The Insulted and the Humiliated*, directed by Andrei Zvyagintsev, based on a novel by Dostoevsky. The film stars Nastassja Kinski and the renowned Russian director Nikita Mikhalkov. The film has been preceded by its reputation, which is such that the increasingly fidgety audience remains loath to leave.

1pm: Palestinian Rashid Mashharawi's *Haifa* is screened

in the Small Hall. Mashharawi who has worked on the mise-en-scene of several films, now lives in Holland where he has his own production company. *Haifa* is both the title of the film and the name of the protagonist. Rashid's work is not the sort that creates or broaches dilemmas to be resolved; rather, it is low-key and intimate. He is particularly skilled at weaving the ambience of secret assignations — glances through windows, the stolen moments of togetherness — into a resonant tale. With exceptional acting from Mohamed Bakri in the lead, the film was deservedly popular with festival-goers.

After watching *Haifa*, I try to procure an invitation to the festival closing ceremony. For the fourth time I go to the press centre where I am told that Saadeddin Wahba himself does not dole out the invitations. I realise I'm not going to attend the closing ceremony.

Saturday, 14 December

The Austrian film, *Land of Dreams*, part of the Naguib Mahfouz competition, is being screened at 10am. The French film *Will it Snow this Christmas*, eventually wins the Mahfouz award. Unfortunately it never received a press screening in the Small Hall.

Sunday, 15 December

Though the festival officially closed yesterday, screenings continue in the Small Hall. I do not go.



"A tent is where the heart is." For the 250 Palestinians living in the Salloum desert, home is a camp between borders

photos: Aimen Al-Sayyad/Al-Majalla

'Until we're part of the world'

Homeless bound

Despite the many manifestations of a new life created within the 500-metre long Palestinian refugee camp on the Egyptian-Libyan border, despair lingers in the air. Amira Howeidy ventures into Libyan Salloum

Inside one of 60 shabby, patched-up, foul-smelling tents, Aymen Gomaa's family is watching the Egyptian satellite channel. Their red television set is their only means of entertainment since being stranded in the desert straddling the Egyptian-Libyan borders more than 15 months ago. They are Palestinian refugees who live in the "Camp of Return".

Next to the television set, Aisha Khamis is shaving her father-in-law's beard with a blunt knife. Beside her, her mother-in-law is busy bathing her three-week-old grandson, Essam, in a big bowl of warm water. Essam is camp member number 251.

Although he is not the first to be born in the camp, the story of Essam's birth has been told and retold; his 21-year-old mother, Aisha, did not know when she arrived at the Egyptian borders from Libya with her family in August last year, that she would begin a new life in this isolated desert on the Salloum elevation.

Egyptian authorities denied her family an entry visa. They were forced to take shelter, together with another four Palestinian families, in an old building on the Libyan side, hoping for a solution to their problem "in a matter of days." Aisha told *Al-Ahram Weekly*.

But a few days became more than one year and the five families grew to 35 as more and more Palestinians were thrown out of Libya on Mu'ammar Gaddafi's orders and denied entry into Egypt. A few months after the first families arrived, Aymen Gomaa came from El-Arich (close to Rafah, Gaza). It was love at first sight; he and Aisha decided to get married last spring in the camp. A wedding dress was brought from Tripoli and a Libyan *ma'zoun* [Muslim minister] came from the Libyan border town of Mossa'id to wed and witness the first wedding held in this no man's land.

"When the *ma'zoun* was filling in the data required in the contract, he paused a little at the blank *place*," recounted Aymen. "We didn't know what to do so, we wrote the 'Camp of Return'." The name stuck.

With no medical care or supervision during her pregnancy, Aisha's health grew weaker as the date of delivery drew near. Her family became very worried; they had not forgotten the tragedy of a woman, seven months pregnant, who arrived during the first days of the camp's establishment. She had complications, bled heavily and a few days after she gave birth to her child in a Libyan hospital, the baby died. The woman returned to the camp bitter and angry at "those who killed her son."

Aisha's father-in-law, Gomaa, Abdel-Latif, recounted that despite such suffering, they still had faith in God: "We put our fears aside and took her to a hospital in Mossa'id after obtaining permission from the Libyans. She gave birth to a healthy child, but she is still weak."

The camp has adapted itself to stress and extreme hardship. Thirty-five Palestinian families are crammed into 60 tents with no running water, health care and, sometimes, even no food. Snakes, scorpions and scorpions are still to be found in the camp. They are staying to get used to their bitter reality. Most are waiting for the new tents promised by the medical charity Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF).

Salloum is 400 metres above sea level. The temperature reaches 50 degrees Celsius in the summer and drops to -10 degrees Celsius in winter. With no electric heater, the only way to stay relatively warm is to remain seated inside the tent wrapped up in many clothes and blankets as possible.

MSF and other humanitarian organisations have been trying to provide medicine and fresh water for camp residents. But the supplies did not seem to suffice and MSF decided to send two workers to live in the camp to determine exactly what is needed.

"It's absolutely freezing at night," said 34-year-old MSF worker Paula Calahan as her teeth chattered in the cold. "I couldn't sleep during my first night. Everything here is so difficult; fresh water is not always provided by the UN for logistical reasons."

The most urgent supplies, Paula and her husband decided the MSF should provide are tents, cement to cover the ground and electricity lines. Dressed in modest Egyptian clothes and a thin shawl, Paula pointed out that although it was possible, she and her husband refused to live in more luxurious conditions. They chose to sleep, eat and spend their days exactly like the camp res-

idents. "We experience their suffering in order to be able to properly assess what they really need," she said.

Return camp was the focus of international attention when Libyan President Mu'ammar Gaddafi, critical of the Israeli-Palestinian peace accords, announced last year that he would expel all 30,000 Palestinians in Libya. Nowadays hardly any mention is made of the fate of the camp's residents. Believing the accords left the 4 million Palestinian refugees worldwide with no hope of ever returning to their home, Gaddafi decided to take action and pressure the Israelis and Palestinians to put the refugee issue on their agenda. The result was that more than 1,200 Palestinians ended up in the garbage-strewn border camp.

Several hundred more with travel papers made it to Syria, Lebanon, Jordan or the Palestinian territories. And after lobbying by Arab governments, Gaddafi took about 650 back. Those left behind are mainly descendants of the Palestinians who fled their homes after the occupation of Palestine and the creation of the state of Israel in 1948. None of the peace accords signed so far (Oslo, Cairo and Taba) makes any mention of the 1948 Palestinians, while some reference is made to the displaced Palestinians who fled their homes in the 1967 war.

Horrified by the fear that their camp would meet the same fate as dozens of other Palestinian refugee camps scattered throughout Arab countries, six Palestinians began a hunger strike last week. "No one is doing anything for us and we are fed up with all of this," said one young Palestinian who was sitting under a sign in Arabic reading, "We are observing a hunger strike until our problem is solved."

But what if it isn't? "I will fast until I die, and God is with us," said Said Elewa 57, who arrived at the camp two months ago. He had tried to visit his Egyptian wife and children who live in Cairo but was stopped by Egyptian border security forces.

Some 20 Palestinians in the camp are married to Egyptian wives and are living with the hope that the Egyptian authorities will grant them residence in Egypt. "Half of my family lives in Egypt, three of my sons and my wife. All I want is to live with them. Isn't that my right as a human being?" said Ismail Elhan, a Palestinian who lived and worked in Egypt for 11 years before he left to work in Libya for higher wages. "I didn't realize that after all this I would be thrown into the desert."

Many of these men's Egyptian wives live in Egypt with their children and come to visit their husbands every three or four months. The rest take turns lobbying the Interior Ministry to forward requests to the presidency for their husbands' residency.

"We know that the Egyptian nationality law

does not grant the husband of an Egyptian wife or her children the nationality. We are not asking for that; we just want to live in Egypt since we can't live in Palestine," said Shadia Abdel-Hamid, an Egyptian married to a Palestinian.

But the chances that Shadia's wishes come true are very slim. Allowing them to enter Egypt without proper papers to move on to their country is not a solution to the problem. Nafis al-Gharr, head of the Human Rights Department in the Foreign Ministry told *The Weekly*. "As for those married to Egyptians, said Gabr, "their situation is being studied from a legal perspective in the ministry."

But according to a source in the ministry, Egypt "has closed this file and will not open it again." If Egypt permits any of the 189 refugees inside the country, it will be faced with 30,000 Palestinians in Libya without work permits or residences, who will demand the same right, said the source.

"The only practical solution in this case is that Libya contains this problem," he said.

The source noted that Egypt had filed this request several times, the latest of which was during President Mubarak's visit to Libya three weeks ago. On the other hand,



Worldwide distribution of the Palestinian population

Category of refugee	Population (1995)	Percentage of total population	Number of Refugees
Refugees	1,064,575	14%	542,647
Refugees in Egypt	775,227	10%	387,442
Refugees in Jordan	62,155	1%	62,155
Refugees in Lebanon	1,064,575	14%	478,696
Refugees in Syria	2,145,451	28%	710,812
Refugees in Libya	301,174	4%	355,426
Refugees in Iraq	374,133	5%	57,791
Refugees in other countries	57,791	1%	57,791
Refugees in Europe	73,350	1%	73,350
Refugees in America	240,128	3%	240,128
Refugees in Australia	26,000	—	15,000
Refugees in Canada	104,225	1%	104,225
Refugees in New Zealand	55,746	1%	55,746
Refugees in South Africa	224,241	3%	166,151
Refugees in other countries	224,241	3%	166,151
TOTAL	7,697,529	100%	4,645,248

which is what Egypt doesn't want."

But it seems that Egypt has partially solved this problem. According to Panos Monis, head of the UNHCR regional bureau, Egypt has "moved" its borders with Libya by shifting the Libyan borders 300 metres towards Egypt, thereby locating the camp's area inside Libya and not in no man's land as it was when the camp was constructed last year.

As the camp awaits a political solution which may never come, life continues inside the 60 tents. Some of the residents have taken up gardening and green plants surround their tents. Others make a living by storing smuggled objects — a service which earns them a few hundred dollars per month, according to an Egyptian customs official. "Some of them who were caught confessed," he said.

The sun sets at 4:30pm as some of the camp residents, originally teachers, finish off their daily lessons to the children who run around the camp playing with stray dogs, playing football and hide and seek. The elder generations retire to their tents and watch the satellite channels. "Every day we watch what is happening in the outside world, maybe one day we will be part of it," signed Shadia.

THE CAMP of Return — a name which holds much symbolism for Palestinians — is the most recent manifestation of the usurpation of Palestine and the creation of the state of Israel in 1948. Months after the establishment of Israel, the UN issued Resolution 193, stipulating the right of Palestinians to return to their land and receive compensation. But the resolution, like many others, was never implemented and continues to be ignored by Israel.

The camp itself is only one of dozens of Palestinian refugee camps spread throughout Jordan, Gaza, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt and along the borders between these nations. Border camps have continued to grow in number during the past 48 years. Although the "right to return" has become a political idiom, the fate of more than four million refugees remains at best undetermined.

The three existing Palestinian-Israel peace accords (Oslo, Cairo and Taba) made no reference nor offered any solutions to the problem of the Palestinian refugees forced out in 1948. This, along with Jerusalem, settlements, security and border issues, has been left for the final stage of the peace negotiations.

In principle, the Oslo peace accords recognise the right of "displaced" Palestinians from the 1967 War to return. A special four-member refugee committee consisting of representatives from Israel, the Palestinian National Authority, Egypt and Jordan was formed to follow up the return issue. Although it has assembled four times already, the committee accomplished little except for entry permits issued by Israel for an annual quota of 2,000 Palestinians to enter the West Bank and Gaza.

According to Mohamed Sobeh, Arab League Palestinian representative, the reason why the committee has failed so far in reaching a consensus is that Israel continues to question the estimated number of the 1967 Palestinians. The Palestinians claim they are more than 800,000 while Israel insists they are only 90,000. Israel also refuses to recognise the descendants of the 1948 Palestinians as "refugees" and these are estimated at 4,650,000.

According to Israel's definition, a displaced Palestinian is "a citizen who emigrated from the West Bank and Gaza during the [1967] war". This ignores the greater part of the displaced Palestinians.

The Palestinian definition, on the other hand, includes those citizens who emigrated during the war, the citizens of the Occupied Territories who were living abroad at the time of the war and were not allowed to return and the citizens of the Occupied Territories who lost the right to reside there after 1967 as a result of the policies and obstacles created by the Israeli authorities.

During the refugee committee meetings, however, Israel recognised only 200,000 "displaced" Palestinians' right to enter the West Bank and Gaza for "humanitarian", not political reasons. The bigger problem, however, was Israel's insistence on referring to the "entry" rather than the "return" of the displaced, which was rejected by the Palestinian side. As the "return" deadlock continues to persist, refugee camps remain the only home for thousands of Palestinians.



The hysterical fans, holding colourful flags supporting Zamalek during the match



photo Hosam Diab Team Captain Ismail Yousef receiving the Champions Cup photo Mohamed Wassef

Zamalek fever

Playing before a less than subdued — they were hysterical — capacity crowd, estimated at 100,000 at the Cairo Stadium, with a spill-over of at least 10,000 more outside, Zamalek nabbed its fourth African Champions Cup trophy. All home club biases were set aside as fans made the area outside the arena resplendent with the white flags of Zamalek and the red, yellow, and green flags representative of other Egyptian clubs in a show of support.

Zamalek was leading 2-0 and was heading to an apparent 3-2 aggregate victory when Nigeria's John Benson outmaneuvered the home team's goalkeeper Hussein El-Sayed with a left-footed drive out at the goal's mouth in the 89th minute.

It was the same scenario as that played out during the first-leg match which took place two weeks ago in Nigeria between the two sides. Egyptian mid-fielder Tarek Moustafa spoiled the Nigerians' celebrations of a 2-0 victory, as he scored a last-minute goal to change the result to 2-1.

That score sent the game to penalties, where Benson — a hero only moments before — was turned into villain when he bounced the Stars' final attempt off the crossbar.

The Stars saw Nigeria's chances of ending a title drought in the Champions Cup vanish, keeping the West African nation's 30-year record of never having won the crown intact.

Zamalek's victory gave Egypt a sweep of Africa's two premier club titles. The Cup Winners Cup went to cross-town rivals Arab Contractors two weeks ago when they defeated Sodigraf of Zaire 4-0. This victory increased Egypt's superiority over their Nigerian counterparts. The two countries have played 10 matches in 20 years; the Egyptian teams won six encounters and scored 19 goals, while the Nigerians have taken four matches and scored 11 goals.

Zamalek took control of the game early on, but were thwarted by Shooting Stars goal-keeper Biodun Baruwa, on an early chance.

Veteran striker Ayman Mansour struck out when he hit the left post in the 18th minute, but then set up Zamalek's first goal 11 minutes later. Mansour sent a low cross inside the box to unmarked defender Medhat Adel-Hadi, suffering from a bad cold which struck him the day before the match, who connected with a left-footed drive.

The Egyptian team doubled its advantage in

the 66th minute when Mansour scored one of his own, finishing off a play that started with defender Ashraf Qassem, who sent mid-fielder Tarek Moustafa a through ball. Moustafa was able to outpace an advancing Baruwa down the right side before lifting a cross to Mansour, who scored off a header.

Defender Qassem was the only Zamalek player on the field from the team's winning line-up for the African Champions Cup in 1986, when he, at the age of 18, was a new-born star, playing in the African final.

The Stars chances seemed to sink when David Ugaga was sent off for punching Osama Nahib in the 60th minute. The Nigerian club, however, was still able to generate some offensive manoeuvres, sending the game to penalties with a minute remaining.

With only seconds to go in the match, Zamalek's German Manager Olk Werner kept his head well enough to pull goalie Hussein El-Sayed and replace him with Nader El-Sayed, the team's expert penalty saver. El-Sayed rescued two penalties in the semi-final against Taraby of Tunisia to give Zamalek the victory to carry through to the final.

The final went into spot-kicks almost im-

mediately — African competitions do not allow for extra time in an aggregate draw — when both teams scored four out of their five regulation penalties before Osama Nabil put Zamalek ahead 5-4. Stars' substitute Ademola Johnson sent the ball scorching to post only to see it hit the underside of the bar and bounce out to give Zamalek the victory.

"It was bad for the heart," commented Zamalek's Werner, "But I had confidence in my players and I know they can take penalties."

Amidu Shokeib, coach of both the Shooting Stars and the Nigerian national team, said, "We were a little overwhelmed by the crowd but we did well to fight back".

A melee ensued when Nigerian supporters, pelted with objects throughout the game by unsportsmanlike home fans on the terraces above, returned fire. Police chased the agitators from the terraces with 20 minutes of the match still to play. The disturbance left six people injured and one stadium gate wrecked in addition to other unspecified damage.

Zamalek previously won the Champions Cup in '84, '86, and '93, with all of the four titles taken with penalty shoot-outs.

Zamalek won its fourth African Champions Cup in 12 years besting Shooting Stars of Nigeria. The Egyptian triumph rounds out three decades of frustration for Nigeria

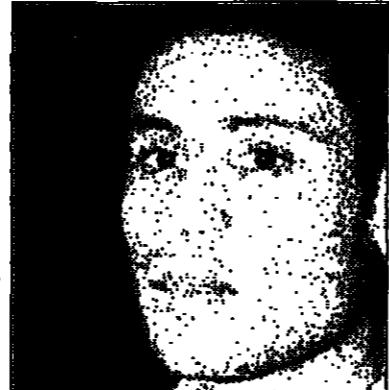
Continental clash

The line-up for an African squad to play Europe on 29 January in Lisbon has been announced by the African Football Federation, with defender Yasser Radwan the only Egyptian among the twenty-man team

A selection of 20 top footballers has been named by the Confederation Africaine de Football to represent the continent in a match against Europe in the new year. The match, the proceeds of which will be donated to Europe's 1997 "Year Against Racism", is scheduled for 29 January in Lisbon.

Former Algerian coach Rabah Madjer is set to direct the team which includes members from Algeria, Cameroon, Chad, Egypt, Ghana, Liberia, Morocco, Nigeria, and South Africa.

While it comes as no surprise that Olympic winners Nigeria, with 10 footballers, will be the dominant force on the squad, the exclusion of proven talents has been the cause of some consternation. Only defender Mark Fish



Egypt's Yasser Radwan

on his football career.

Other African footballer of the year finalists not selected for the historic match were Zamian Kalusha Bwaya, Nigerian Emmanuel Amunike and the injured Ghanaian Anthony Yeboah.

Yeboah's fellow countryman, veteran German-based mid-fielder Abedi Pele, is considered the likely captain of the team which three-time Senegalese national coach Mawade Wade will manage.

The choice of Madjer as coach, sacked by Algeria last year after indifferent results, has disappointed South Africa, which considered Africa Nations Cup-winning coach Clive Barker a natural choice.

Unknowns Udoji left a trail of leading clubs in their wake last year on their way to securing their first national title while Kalou were runners-up to Etoile du Sahel in the 1995 CAF Cup.

Other intriguing ties include the East African clash between Breweries of Kenya and Al-Hilal of Sudan and the renewal of an old national rivalry when Caps United Zimbabwe tackle Express of Uganda.

Munias Sugar of Kenya looks set for a baptism by fire in the Cup Winners Cup against Arab Contractors, who clinched a third title last week with their four-goal demolition of Zaire's Sodigraf. Mansour, the second Egyptian entrant, will head south to Khartoum, where they will play against 1989 Cup Winners Cup champions Al-Marrikh.

Scrooged

The air of celebration following Egypt's dual triumphs in recent African championships was dampened following a ruling by the Confederation Africaine de Football on fan behaviour at an African nations qualifier at the Cairo Stadium in October

penalties in future.

A date was also decided for the African Super Cup tournament, between home rivals, the African Cup Winners Cup champions Arab Contractors and the Champions Cup winners Zamalek. The EGF was given the latitude to select 14, 15 or 16 February for the match to be held at the Cairo Stadium.

The CAF board likewise announced the 1997 schedule and programme for African competitions. A formidable line-up of former title holders are included in the 114 clubs set to compete.

With the CAF dividing clubs on the basis of strength and geography, the first round normally serves as a seeding process.

Regional showdowns regularly provide the greatest excitement with the West African derby between newcomers Udoji United of Nigeria and the experienced Kalou Stars of Guinea, a major Cham-

pions Cup attraction.

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Edited by Inas Mazhar

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مكتبة من الأصل

FINLAND

EGYPT

Special supplement marking
Finland's Independence Day

A message from the Finnish ambassador to Cairo, Garth Castren, on Finland's Independence Day

Finland supports the vital Egyptian role in the Middle East peace process

The strong ties between Finland on the one hand, and Egypt and the Arab world on the other, go back centuries to the days of Arab and Finnish travellers, such as Ibn Fadlan, who visited the steppes of Finland and its rich forests and lakes in the 13th century, or the explorer George August (1811-1852) who visited Egypt and the Arabian Peninsula in the 19th century, converted to Islam and changed his name to Abdel-Mawla. Because of Finland's wonderment with Middle Eastern civilisation in general, and Ancient Egyptian civilisation in particular, Egypt occupies a prominent place in history books used in Finnish schools. Among these books, for example, is the story of the well-known Pharaonic physician Snouhi, which Finnish writer Mica Valteri wrote about. An Arabic translation of this book is available in Egypt.

Diplomatic ties between Egypt and Finland go back to 1947, and since that time have developed at a rapid pace to include all fields. Finland's neutral policy runs in agreement with the non-alignment policy followed by Egypt. Finland supported the peaceful policy of Egypt in the '70s when Finnish peacekeeping forces were sent to Sinai in the wake of the 1973 War, and has likewise supported Egypt's emerging role in the Middle East peace process. Finland's role and interest in the Middle East countries of the Mediterranean increased after it gained membership in the European Union, and likewise has symbolically become the region's closest nation.

As for economic relations between the two countries, annual economic assistance to Egypt began in 1975, and varied in size according to the projects undertaken.

This should not be perceived as the complete picture, for cooperative relations between the two countries include numerous fields such as power, foodstuffs safety, cartography, an infrastructure database, agricultural products, fighting against environmental pollution, factories and sanitation and water treatment stations. It is worth mentioning that the first hospital built in the

Sinai after its liberation in 1982, at Bir El-Abd, was a gift to Egypt from the Finnish people.

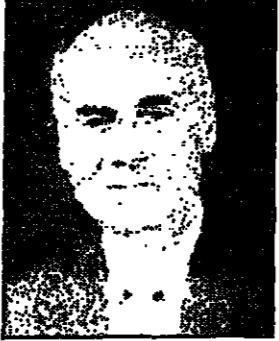
Finland's foreign policy is aimed towards promoting world peace, through peaceful conflict resolution and through the activities of the United Nations aimed at spreading solidarity. It has also supported the signing of treated aimed at banning nuclear testing.

Finland is a nation that has upheld its commitment to the United Nations by paying its dues and supporting the role it plays in the international arena.

Finland likewise acknowledges the pioneering role of Egypt in supporting regional and world peace. Finland was also the first country to write off Egypt's accumulated debts, which had reached LE160 million by 1990.

As for commercial ties between the two countries, Finnish exports to Egypt include printing paper, lumber, and advanced technological equipment such as portable telephones which enjoys prominence in the Egyptian market, whereby the volume of Finnish exports to Egypt has reached LE330 million annually. On the other hand, Egyptian exports to Finland such as produce and cotton products occupy a high rank in the Finnish market, in spite of the strong competition with other countries. Egypt has become Finland's number one trading partner from North Africa, and number two in the Middle East. Truly I can say that for the more than 4 years I have been Egypt, I have been a witness to the dramatic changes that have taken place in the Egyptian economy, without which could not have made it possible for the MENA III summit to be held in Cairo last month. The President of Finland Martti Ahtisaari was able to visit Egypt last March, where he met with President Hosni Mubarak and a number of high-ranking officials.

On a personal note, I would like to say Egypt's Foreign Ministry and diplomats are first-class professionals. The Middle East, especially Egypt, has left a lasting influence on me.



Garth Castren



Mr Martti Ahtisaari, president of the Republic of Finland

Helsinki: Mohamed Seif El-Yazi

YIT Corporation opens branch office in Cairo

Paper and state-of-the art technology from the Arctic Circle

FINLAND, the northernmost country of Scandinavia which shares a border with Russia, is the biggest producer of paper in Europe. The country is also known for Santa Claus and icebreakers, Nokia telephones and Wärtsilä diesel engines.

Politically, Finland is a stable, Nordic democracy, a member country of the European Union. In many fields of specialised know-how, the country's industry competes on the very top of the world.

During the entire decade, Finland has been learning to cope with free, international competition. We have paid hard for the education in many ways, but now the country is recovering from years of recession and getting back on its feet. National economy is quickly getting sounder, business enterprises are strong and com-

petitive. However, the rate of unemployment remains high, about 15 per cent.

Although Finnish economy is growing at a relatively fast rate, the labour market is rigid and slow to move, there is a great deal of unnecessary bureaucracy related to corporate activity, and taxation is a strong controlling factor in the country's business life.

Finnish enterprises have become international in a very short time. Finnish paper industry is the largest in Europe. The share of paper and forest industries of the country's export is over 30 per cent. However, the share of metal industry, particularly information technology and communication based on state-of-the-art applica-

tions is already bigger than the share of paper.

Rauma-Enso: Importers of the best Finnish wood

RAUMA-ENSO, one of the top exporters of soft timber, is the product of a merger between two of the most well-known Finnish exporters of timber to North Africa and countries of the Mediterranean, Enso Timber Ltd and United Sawmills Ltd.

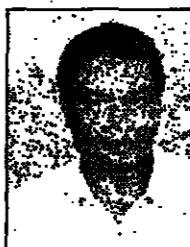
These two companies are renowned for the high quality of their products with their superior finishing and top-quality packaging. Rauma-Enso was formed to ship its product to the Egyptian market, and, with the passing of years, has developed the capacity to provide customers with timber to all parts of the region, with precision and speed.

Relations between the Rauma-Enso and Egyptian companies grew as a result of the *infish* policy pursued by Egypt, and continues to grow until this very day. Likewise, competition among Egyptian timber companies for sales of this timber has resulted in the consumer getting the best value for his money, more so if timber was imported from any other country. Rauma-Enso is a company which aims at providing the best of timber for the best price. The company's timber includes the highest-quality redwood of all sizes for sale to furniture manufacturers.

El-Bar sewage treatment plant.

One of YIT's basic principles in international operations has been the cooperation with local companies, designers and contractors. That policy has also been followed in Egypt with good proficiency. From the very beginning, YIT has been utilising the local workforce, suppliers, workshops and subcontractors in their projects. That kind of activity is expected to be even more effective after registering the branch office.

Mr Farouk Ali, who has already had a successful 12 years with YIT, is acting as branch manager in the new Zamaalek office located on 3 Abu Feda Street.



Matti Aura
General manager
Central Chamber of
Commerce of Finland



Farouk Ali
Manager
Egyptian branch

RAUMA-ENSO

تجارة الأخشاب

TIMBER SALES

راوما انزو

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Rauma-Enso Timber Sales Ltd is a joint marketing organisation for sawn timber in North Africa and Middle East owned by two major Finnish sawn timber producers: Enso Timber Ltd and United Sawmills Ltd, whose products are known for their high and consistent quality and excellent presentation and packaging.

Over the past years Rauma-Enso Timber Sales has built up a regular delivery system of their goods to the Egyptian market. Today, Rauma-Enso is able to offer their clients accurate and quick deliveries all over the region.



WOOD - A SUSTAINABLE RESOURCE

Finland is the most heavily forested country in Europe. Two-thirds of the area of Finland is covered by forest. The forest is the only renewable natural resource in Finland — always utilised in various ways. The Finnish forest industry is sufficiently versatile to utilise more than 90 per cent of the tree: either as energy or as material for a product. One of these products and one of the few renewable materials in the world is sawn timber.

MARTTI AHTISAARI,
President of Finland



AN EXAMPLE OF FINNISH WOOD IN USE



EXAMINING THE VARIETIES OF WOOD

COMPLETE PRODUCT RANGE

Thanks to the great number of versatile production units, Rauma-Enso Timber Sales is able to offer a very wide choice of products:

- High quality redwood in all dimensions for carpenters, joinery and furniture makers
- Redwood and whitewood for construction
- Redwood and whitewood schoolboards
- Top quality Finnish fillers/balks for builders
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THE WORK TEAM AT THE HELSINKI OFFICE



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مكتبة من الأصل

FINLAND + EGYPT

Special supplement marking Finland's Independence Day

Kvaerner Masa-Yards Inc — the experienced builder of ships

Kvaerner Masa-Yards Inc operates two modern newbuilding yards in Finland: Turku New Shipyard and Helsinki New Shipyard. Kvaerner a.s. Shipbuilding Group is one of the largest in the world with newbuilding yards in five countries. Kvaerner Masa-Yards, with its 5000 employees, is the largest company within the group.

Kvaerner Masa-Yards specializes in designing and producing technically advanced ships for clients who demand competitive-ness, reliability and quality.

In addition to producing LNG carriers, Kvaerner Masa-Yards builds cruise liners and passenger ferries, icebreakers and ice-going tonnage and other special technology vessels, such as special tankers, cable ships, dredgers, research vessels, crane vessels, heavy-lift and offshore vessels.

In spite of the overcapacity and a generally low price level within the shipbuilding industry, Kvaerner Masa-Yards has succeeded in increasing its profitability and in maintaining a reasonably high orderbook at its two shipyards. 1995 was Kvaerner Masa-Yards' best year. In its six years of existence, a result of a strict commit-

ment to the development of the core values of Kvaerner Masa-Yards — our experienced dedicated personnel and our efficient highly modern production facilities.

Satisfying customers is our prime goal. This is achieved by producing, at competitive prices, top quality products that incorporate the best technical solution and delivering them on schedule. We know that our customers' success is the key to Kvaerner Masa-Yards' own prosperity — and will continue to refine and develop our operations for this purpose.

Committed personnel

Kvaerner Masa-Yards has a personnel of about 4,900. A rational teamwork model has been introduced throughout the organization. Clear goals, open communication, trust and confidence, and involvement in everyday decision-making yield a high level of commitment and motivation. The professional, highly-skilled personnel produce excellent workmanship at a competitive cost.



Martin Saarikangas
President
Kvaerner Masa-Yards

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Finland: A stable, fast-growing economy



Niels-Christian Berg
Chief executive
Invest in Finland Bureau

FINLAND — a member of the European Union since the beginning of 1995 — is a small but thriving industrial nation with a unique role in exploiting the possibilities of what has been called the "New Northern Europe" market area. The economy is one of the fastest-growing in the EU.

Over recent years many millions of dollars have been invested in Finland by European and American businesses keen to take advantage of the country's position as a base for exporting to growing markets in Scandinavia, Eastern and Central Europe and the former Soviet Union.

The geography of Finland is one reason for the overseas investment which is taking place. Goods can be delivered to the important market of St. Petersburg, for instance, within 12 hours and to Moscow within 24 hours. Stockholm is only a few hours away, the whole of Eastern Europe is within easy reach.

With a population of only five million, the Finns have always

realized that their prosperity depends on being able to sell high-quality products to the world. Recently they have been

in the forefront of the information technology revolution

— as everybody knows if they have watched the remarkable

growth of Nokia, Europe's largest manufacturer of mobile phones.

Konecranes: A leader in the design and manufacture of large cranes

KONECRANES was founded in 1933 in the Finnish city of Hyvinkää to produce large-scale cranes. Since this date, the company has become a leading company in the field, designing and manufacturing cranes of the highest standard in the world, meeting the needs of ports and companies all over the world.

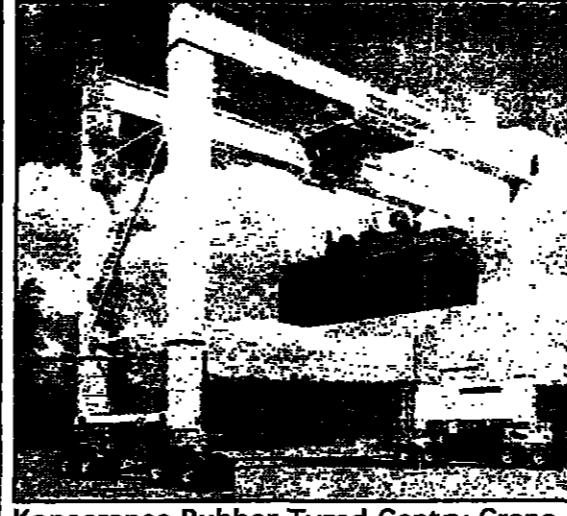
During the 2nd Cairo Maritime Exhibition, Marines 96, Money and Business conducted an interview with project manager Thomas Sastamoinen and Hossam Shalik, the company's agent in Egypt. Shalik said that his company is keeping pace with the development and modernisation policies initiated by President Hosni Mubarak, under the supervision of Minister of Transport and Communications Suleiman Metwally. He stated: "We are participating in this exhibition to display the latest in winch technology, design and manufacture. This is a great opportunity for us to offer our services to the sea transport

sector in Egypt, serving Egyptian ports. Our company serves the national economy within the policy that seeks to boost exports and to compete at the international level in order to attract foreign investments. Sastamoinen stated that the company's emphasis is on simplicity of design and high production standards, developed at the company's research and design department.

He added that the after-sales service department has locations throughout the world to provide maintenance to 75 thousand winches of all types. The department also maintains highly-trained engineers who operate efficiently to meet customer demand for spare parts, training, and consultation.

The Konecranes wing at the Cairo Maritime Exhibition showed leaders of Egypt's maritime industry the quality of goods and services offered by the company.

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NOTE

We wish to draw to the attention of official bodies, individuals and agents that Finnish area codes have been changed

New area codes



Example:
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Old area codes	2	3	5	6	8	9	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
21	16	51	61	81	0	73	41	55	60	71	28	11	
22	17	52	62	82		74	42	56	692	72	12		
24	18	53	63	83		75	43	57	695	77	14		
25	19	54	64	84		76	44	58	694	78	15		
26	31		65	85			45	59	695	79			
30	32		66	86			46		697				
32	33		67	88			47		698				
38	34		68	89									
39	35												
	36												
	37												

Kvaerner Masa-Yards

The second of four LNG carriers for Abu Dhabi National Oil Company, Newbuilding no. 1331, was named at Kvaerner Masa-Yards' Turku New Shipyard



The naming ceremony of the second liquefied natural gas carrier, in a series of four 135,000 m³ ships ordered by Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC), United Arab Emirates, took place today at Kvaerner Masa-Yards' Turku New Shipyard.

The naming ceremony was honoured by the presence of His Excellency Mr. Yousef Omar Bin Yousef, secretary-general of the Abu Dhabi Supreme Petroleum Council and general manager of Abu Dhabi National Oil Company, Mr. Hiroshi Araki, president of Tokyo Electric Power Company, and sponsor of the vessel, Mrs. Kumiko Araki, who named the vessel *Mraweh*. His Excellency Mr. Mohammad Sultan Al-Awais, United Arab Emirates ambassador to Finland, Mrs. Sumiko Takahara, ambassador of Japan in Finland, Mr. Salah Salem Al-Shanosi, project director of ADNOC, Mr. Satoshi Shiraiishi, director and senior general manager of Tokyo Electric Power Company, Abu Dhabi Gas Liquefaction Company and other senior management of Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADGAS), National Gas Shipping Company (NGSCO), Mitsui & Co., British Petroleum, TOTAL and ship managers Götaverken.

The naming ceremony, which was attended by some 200 guests, was hosted by Mr. Martin Saarikangas, president and CEO of Kvaerner Masa-Yards Inc.

The 135,000 m³ LNG carrier *Mraweh*, one of the largest LNG carriers in the world, will be delivered to her owners shortly, followed by two sisterships in 1997. The order of four LNG carriers was placed in April 1993. The first vessel, *Mubarak*, was delivered in January, and has since successfully been engaged in transporting LNG from Abu Dhabi Gas Liquefaction Company to Tokyo Electric Power Company in Japan under the operation of the National Gas Shipping Company.

The LNG cargo container system is based on the Kvaerner Masa-type spherical aluminium tank design. Differing from other 135,000 m³ vessels built, the LNG carriers developed by Kvaerner Masa-Yards have only four spherical aluminium cargo tanks, simplifying cargo systems and operations. The LNG tank manufacturing method, recently developed at the Turku New Shipyard, is the most modern in the world.

Main particulars of LNG carrier *Mraweh*:

Overall length	290 m	Dead-weight	72,950 tonnes
Breadth	48.1 m	Gross tonnage	116,700
Depth to upper deck	27.0 m	Machinery output	29,600 kw
Design draught	11.3 m	Service speed	19.5 knots



For more information, please contact:

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Pack of Cards

by Madame Sosostris

▼ This week a delegation of students from the Talaat Harb Secondary School for Girls, Mehalia El-Kobra, paid a visit to the *Weekly*. They met with our Editor-in-Chief Hosny Gandy who explained the role of an Egyptian English language newspaper with an Egyptian perspective. Our reporter on environmental affairs, Makhoud Bakr was at hand. He came out of the

♦ On the occasion of the 25th

American Chamber Of Commerce In Egypt

USAID GRANT NO. 263-0225-G-00-6073-00
Business Link Project: Invitation for Bid

American Chamber of Commerce in Egypt (AmCham-Egypt) invites interested bidders to participate in a tender for *system integration and technical services* for "Egypt Business Link", an information services Internet-based project in accordance with the terms and conditions included in the tender document. The main terms and conditions are available on the Internet at <http://www.amcham.org.eg/buserv/buslink>

Interested bidders should collect the tender document from the AmCham offices in Cairo between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. beginning Sunday December 22, 1996. Bidders should also present \$300 per set of documents, along with a letter of request.

Bids shall be delivered to AmCham-Egypt Cairo office by noon, February 20, 1997. Delayed bids will not be considered. Bids shall remain valid for a period of 120 days from the date of delivery.

A pre-tender meeting will be held at noon on Monday, January 20, 1997 to clarify the tender terms and conditions as well as to answer bidders' queries. The meeting will be held at Cairo Marriott Hotel, Verdi ballroom.

American Chamber of Commerce in Egypt
Cairo Marriott Hotel, Suite 1541
E-mail: infocenter@amcham.org.eg
<http://www.amcham.org.eg>

meeting quite pleased with himself. Among the topics of interest in the *Weekly* mentioned by Abdel-Hamid Hamza, a teacher at the school and head of the environmental organisation of Mehalia and Naglaa El-Eid a member of the Information Centre were environmental and development matters.

♦ On the occasion of the 25th



(l-r) Saad Kamel's graphic of Mar Gurgis; Editor-in-Chief Hosny Gandy and guests from Mehalia

Kamel, Abdel-Ghaffar Shadid, Mohamed Higgi, Nicrois Kamel and Ibrahim Ghazala among others.

♦ I feel so intelligent today, I am positively bubbling after attending the symposium organised by the Supreme

Council for Culture at the Greater Cairo Library in Zamalek. The symposium was commemorating the 40th anniversary of Mohamed Heikal's death. Heikal's novel *Zemar*, was first published in 1914 and is considered the precursor of the

genre in Egypt. I must say I was quite happy to mingle in such luxurious surroundings with literary critics and specialists, and sip tea in the garden with Fayza and Ahmed Heikal reminiscing about their father and their house in Nawaal Street.



Al-Nour Eye hospital has the pleasure to invite the graduates of the high institute of nursing to apply for the following positions:

1- Director of nursing services with master degree, preferably PhD in nursing. 5 years experience.

2- Supervisors for: evening shifts, night shifts, outpatient clinics, inpatient floors and operating theaters.

B. Sc. in nursing, 3 years experience and 1 year as a supervisor.

C. V to be mailed to P. O Box 1030/96 Al Ahram Newspaper

Santa Lucia at The Semiramis Inter-Continental

Over 250 members of the Scandinavian community in Cairo were welcomed by Mr & Mrs Emile Ezzat, general manager of Scandinavian Airlines in Egypt and Mrs Nabil Samak, regional director of public relations, Inter-continental Hotels & Resorts Egypt to celebrate Santa Lucia and to start off the season of Christmas festivities at the Semiramis Inter-Continental.

Santa Lucia is a traditional Scandinavian Christmas celebration dating from the 13th century. She was a saint who roamed through the dark streets carrying a light to start off the Christmas season and visiting homes where children joined her and sang the Santa Lucia song.

From then on Santa Lucia has become a Scandinavian Christmas tradition celebrated throughout the country, and every town chooses a Santa Lucia queen, who parades with little girls dressed in white through the streets singing Christmas songs.

Alternatively at Sharm El Sheikh.



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National Bank of Egypt (Property market)

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